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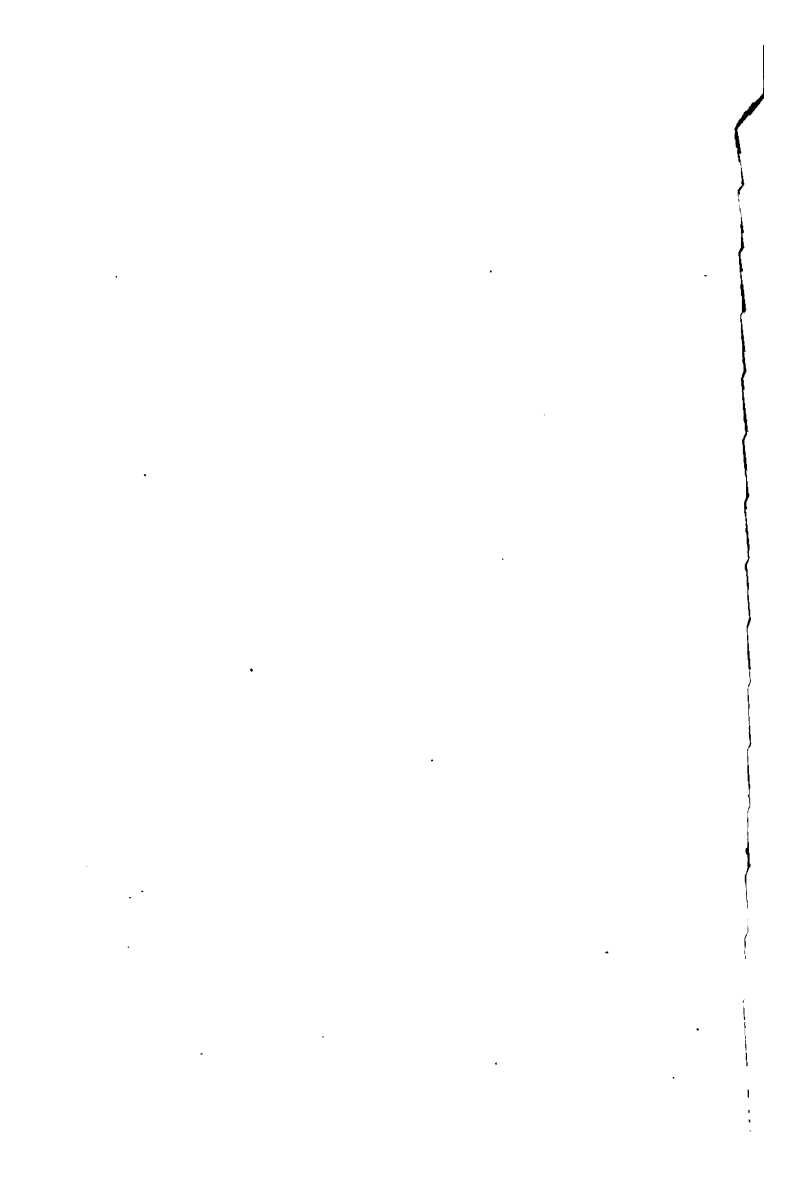
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THE DAY OF BEREAVEMENT.

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THE
DAY OF BEREAVEMENT:

Its Lessons and its Consolations.

BY
GEORGE W. MYLNE.

"WHO HAS NOT LOST A FRIEND!"



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PREFACE.

THE author thinks it necessary to inform such of his readers, as are cognisant of his own late bereavement, that the present work has not been written since the event occurred, indited, as it would then have been, in hot haste under the pressure of immediate woe—the fact being that the work was quite ready for publication, and, but for circumstances over which he had no control, would have made its appearance before his sorrow came.

Some readers may be disappointed at finding so little that is addressed to those established in the grace of God; but his object in preparing the work was rather to speak to those who have not found the con-

solutions of grace, and for whom he had been told that a work like the present was much required. At the same time, he hopes that it may contain much that will commend itself to the hearts and experience of established Christians.

In trying to speak a word in season to the bereaved, it has been the author's desire to avoid the stern didactics of a bare theology, which would seem to ignore the inevitable feelings of the human heart, it being his firm persuasion that, if you desire to do good to the souls of men in the day of adversity, you must show them that you enter into all the particulars of their sorrow.

If this humble effort be according to the mind of God, may He grant it success, and to His name be all the glory in Christ Jesus. Amen and Amen.

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THE DAY OF BEREAVEMENT.



BEREAVEMENT.

BEREAVEMENT! What a word it is—a word of many-headed woes! A word telling of families made desolate; of wounded hearts, and weeping eyes; of closest bonds abruptly torn asunder; of social intercourse extinguished; life's fondest hopes destroyed. It tells of earth become a graveyard; no sunny bliss secure against its inroads; no promise of long companionship so flattering, but in a moment the dream may vanish, and nought be left but the hard reality of woe.

BEREAVEMENT! Yes, it is a word of

anguish. It says that hearts are broken, the iron entering into the very soul; that the axe is laid at the root of life's romance; that the sky of former joys is clouded over with the mantle of distress. How many tales of sorrow does BEREAVEMENT tell! Yet, it is a word fraught with importance to the soul; a word, for purposes of good, framed in the vocabulary of heaven, God's mind and will impressed upon it; the exponent of His judgments; the expression of His love in chastening; the verbal embodiment of His good pleasure. It is His voice in action; speaking in facts; preaching in visitations; the Lord himself walking abroad in His realities. It speaks of DEATH. This is the head and substance of its teaching. It tells how "SIN entered into the world, and DEATH by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that ALL HAVE SINNED" (Rom. v. 12).

Then, is it not a solemn word—a search-

ing word—a word speaking its volumes to all who hear it? Moreover, is it not a special word to THEE? It says, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. xlv. 10). It says, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. xviii. 25). “Shall it be said to God, What doest Thou?” Then, why art thou struck dumb, as though God dealt strangely with thee? Was He bound to grant thy friend a lease of life—to leave the bond unbroken, as long as it suited THEE, or yet to give thee warning of what He meant to do? Must the tide of death be stayed, that it should not rob thee of thy cherished one? Ah no! We are brought through sin into rude contact with confounding providences; yea, face to face with sudden visitations. How often are we made to “drink the wine of” mute “astonishment,” by the stern realities of a fallen world—nature diverted from its normal course by sinful contrarities, calling for

strokes exceptional and sharp—BEREAVEMENT coming at a tangent to wound the circle of our satisfactions! And this is the method that the Lord adopts to arrest our notice; to bring to mind that there is a God in heaven—a truth too often overlooked. It is as though He said, “Mourner, art thou PREPARED TO DIE? Prepared to balance thine account with ME? Art thou READY, if I should send next for THEE?” And thus He brings before us all the realities of an unseen world—the facts of death, of judgment, and eternity.

Then, is there not mercy in BEREAVEMENT—mercy, not in disguise, but manifest—not silent, but speaking plainly? Is it not mercy to be led to see our sins? To see our need of JESUS, and His precious Blood? And through grace, to be AT PEACE WITH GOD through Jesus? Thus God has ordered it, that joy and sorrow should be linked together in His visita-

tions. And thus "the valley of Achor" (in other words, the vale of trouble) is made "a door of hope." And thus "vineyards" are yielded by the same, with fruits of peace. And there mourners are made to "sing as in the days" of youth, from blessings found where least expected.

So wondrous are God's dealings with a fallen world. No sorrow but has its mate—its consolation appropriate and true—the very grief leading to consequences, if rightly followed out, involving peace—solid, well-grounded peace. Afflicted friend, I hope you know the secret. If not, may God reveal it to you. Receive, I pray you, this word of exhortation, kindly intended, and, I trust, not heedlessly expressed. May you be comforted, not with earth's flimsy consolations, but with the solid verities of heaven. Accept the following pages which now I dedicate to thy perusal. And if therein thou find aught suited to

thy need, give God the glory; and may this your sore affliction be duly sanctified, and gilded with His grace.

*THE FIRST BREAK IN THE
FAMILY.*

A BREAK in the family! Did I say the FIRST? Yes; for there are families where death, as yet, has never entered, no breach occurred in the fair circle of domestic intercourse—children and parents, parents and children, in full enjoyment of each other's company. How gladsome thus to see it! We feel inclined to say, "Enjoy it while you have it, and quaff the cup of family endearment with meekness and a thankful heart, remembering from whence the mercy comes—that the Giver be not forgotten in His gifts.

It is sweet to see a family unbroken.

But, watch it long enough, a break is sure to come AT LAST—sooner or later must that sky be overcast. Sickness may enter (if not some fatal accident), sickness not curable, but unto death. Oh, what a chill succeeds—what dread forebodings when the worst is feared, and apprehensions prove too true—when the charm is broken, and that once happy circle has been found no longer proof against the inroads of the enemy! Then desolation reigns where all before was gladness. The darkened rooms; the silent step, as though the softest foot-fall might disturb the slumbering dead; the muffled voice, or utterance choked with tears; the look of anguish, the chastened mien of sorrow deep, yet noiseless; directions given, needful, yet harrowing to the soul—activity that goes against the grain, costing unutterable things.

Oh, who can paint the change where all appears disjointed, turned from its former

course of happiness unclouded and serene ! The little ones scarce realise the fact, the infant mind not taking in the sad reality. Yet, from the tears, the mournful preparations, the putting on of dark apparel, and the funeral-train, they gather glimpses of the truth ; and in their gambols (how hard to be restrained !) they move about as half ashamed. In the youthful members of the family, advanced a stage in realising power, how subdued the light that shines upon them, like the lurid beams of an eclipse, nor wholly sad, nor wholly free from sadness ; feeling their loss, yet struggling the while with youth's dislike of sorrowful restraint ! How touchingly Cowper describes his feelings, as a child, on the occasion of his mother's death !

“ I heard the bell toll'd on thy burial day ;
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away—
And, turning from my nursery-window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu.”

But with the elders of the family how different! Their sorrow is realised in all its fulness—present is compared with past, weighed in the balances of thought, maturely serious, seriously mature—outbreaks of sorrow curiously met with arguments for resignation—a truthful picture of unvarnished woe.

Reader, is it thus with you? Are you one of a family newly broken? Full well I know your feelings, the shock experienced in your inmost soul.

What deep emotions are occasioned by that empty chair!

How eloquent the death-like stillness of that chamber now untenanted!

That genial voice no more will greet your ear.

That once familiar face no more be seen.

When you meet together in the morning, what a blank pervades you all!

When at night you separate, one well-known salutation is listened for in vain!

Oh, what a desolator is Death! The fairest form, the sweetest disposition, the finest mind, the most useful character, is oft the first to go—the choicest treasure of your garden nipped in the bud of fond enjoyment.

“One flower may fill another’s place,
With breath as sweet, with hues as glowing;
One ripple in yon ocean’s space
Be lost amid another’s flowing;

“One star in yon bright azure dome
Might vanish from its sparkling cluster,
Unmiss’d, unmourn’d, and in its room
Some rival orb eclipse its lustre :

“But who shall fill a brother’s room?
Or who shall soothe the bosom’s grieving?
Who heal the heart, around his tomb
Too faithfully, too fondly cleaving?”

—DR BONAR.

Poor mourner, do you ask for CONSOLATION? Fain would I give it, IF you are able to receive the only consolation I can

offer. I might listen for hours to your tale of grief, telling the virtues of the dead, opening afresh the sorrows of your soul. I might attend you to all the haunts of the deceased, bend over the relics that you love to show, go with you to the grave, and there weep with you sob for sob, and tear for tear. But say, would that alone suffice to comfort you? It would help to nurse your sorrow, as full well it might—give a fresh impulse to a morbid strain, might tie you down more strongly to earth's regrets and unavailing musings. But would it indeed console you? Would it turn your bitterness to sweetness? Would it give you "the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness?" (Isa. lxi. 3.)

Oh no! my friend, oh no! Elsewhere must you seek it. Do you ask me WHERE?

Where but in GOD?

Where but in JESUS?

Where but in **THE HOLY GHOST, THE COMFORTER**?

Fond recollections of the dead are not forbidden you—to trace the haunts and love the relics of their earlier days, in fond association with their memory. But then, do you **TAKE JESUS WITH YOU** in your musings? Much as you loved your friend, do you love **JESUS BETTER STILL**? And, as you gaze on fond mementoes, is it with the reserve of grace, lifting your heart the while, as though to say, “Lord, let not this keep my heart from **THEE**! Through Thee I wish to see them all! Lord, sanctify my recollections—may I indulge them in deference to Thee!”

But now permit me, Reader, to ask a question. Think me not rude. Think it not out of place. It underlies the matter both of your duty and your consolation. I ask you then,

Do you feel yourself to be a **SINNER**?

And why this question? Because nought else will bring you to the Cross OF JESUS.

“What next?” you say. “How will that comfort me?” Simply because true comfort comes from God alone; and nought can be received from God, save through the Cross and Him that hung thereon.

NO GOD, NO COMFORT.

NO CHRIST, NO GOD.

NO SENSE OF SIN, NO CHRIST.

NO CHRIST, NO SAVIOUR.

NO CHRIST, NO HOLY GHOST THE COM-FORTER.

NO COMFORTER, NO FRIEND.

Do you doubt me? Then speak about it to GOD HIMSELF. Tell Him your sorrow. Tell Him you sigh for consolation. Ask Him to put you in the way of finding it. Take with you words (Hosea xiv. 2). Speak to Him as a little child.

CONFESS YOUR SINS.

Entreat HIS PARDON THROUGH THE BLOOD
OF CHRIST.

PRAY FOR THE TEACHING OF THE SPIRIT.

Commit your cause to God fully and
unreservedly, prepared to follow His lead-
ings fully; and if you feel your spirit
melting, and thoughts arising in you

OF GOD AND CHRIST,

OF SIN AND PARDON,

OF PENITENCE AND PRAYER,

give yourself to the meditation. It is
as though He said, "Seek ye my face."

And may your heart say unto Him, "Thy
face, Lord, will I seek" (Ps. xxvii. 8).

Who knows but that this may be the
day of grace; the dawning of Christ in
your heart; the day of consolation; the day
of

"The Spirit's rising beam."

—*Hymn.*

THE LOSS OF PARENTS.

How different the PARENTAL-FILIAL, the FILIAL-PARENTAL bond, from other earthly ties, however intimate! In some respects the marriage bond is closer, in others not so close. The connection there was not original, but adventitious—the fruit of after circumstances. But the PARENTAL bond is interwoven with our very being, from the very dawn of life, in its uniting principle. Yea, prior to birth itself, it claims its embryo perfection. Nay more, it antedates the parentage of our immediate parents, and reaches back to our farthest off progenitors. Is it not written, that Levi was in the loins of his forefather Abraham, when he met Melchisedec? (Heb. vii. 10.)

This bond is felt and recognised in childhood, youth, and manhood; nor does it loose its hold when the parental roof is

changed for other homes, as in the married state. Invisible the cords to human eye, that constitute a bond so intimate; yet is their power felt from pole to pole—from east to west, from west to east, traversing both earth and seas. Even at the antipodes the heart is tied to the PARENTAL ROOF, and the chief interest with the mother country is the well-known hearth and HOME; the key-stone of the arch consisting in the PARENTS of the family, and, that key-stone once removed, oh what a change comes over the connection! Brothers and sisters are brothers and sisters still; but their rallying point is gone—the family home no more—the parental wing no longer there, to gather them. The good old MEETING PLACE is broken up, the concentration of life-long interests no more concentrated. Happy, thrice happy, when family endearment survives the shock—when brother cleaves

to brother, in virtue of the parental bond ; when off-set homes, with fond and hearty welcome, rise up to feed the flame of loving intercourse. Yet, however sweet, however cheering, these are but the embers of the family hearth ; and, when they meet together, how fondly they revert to that which never can return ! And thus does frail humanity pay tribute to its own decay, and home realities, as they flicker in the socket of a lingering retrospect, bear testimony to the breaking up of all earthly things.

“ I miss the dear PARENTAL DWELLING,
Which memory still undimm'd recalls,
A thousand early stories telling ;
I miss the venerable walls.

“ I miss the well-remember'd faces,
The voices, forms of other days ;
Time ploughs not up those deep-drawn traces ;
Those lines no ages can erase.”

—DR BONAR.

Can we wonder, then, at what is felt

B

when this bond is cut in twain; when children are left parentless, and life's earliest associations are broken, never to be re-united here below? Oh no, it is nature's privilege to weep on such occasions. Happy they whose filial sorrow leads them to the Saviour and to God, and who then may say, "Put Thou my tears into Thy bottle. Are they not in Thy book?" (Ps. lvi. 8.)

THE DEATH OF A FATHER.

AND are you, then, in mourning for your FATHER, my sorrowing friend? I thought so from your garb. You are feeling now the very depths of family distress, when sable calls to sable to be doubly dark. It is a peculiar sorrow that marks a FATHER's death, and this you never felt before. How could you? One only FATHER had

you—you could not have but one ! And, as he stood to you in a relation shared by none beside, so must your present sorrow be unique in character, embodying, as it does, the retrospect of all that marked him as your earthly head. Oh, there is something inexpressible in a FATHER'S rule—a FATHER'S love ; a FATHER'S thoughtfulness and tender care—in the undefinable association connected with a FATHER'S name ; in all well-regulated families his word the law, his judgment the director of their ways. I envy not the man who does not venerate his FATHER'S memory—still less I envy him (for such, alas ! there are), who had a father that he cannot mourn.

My friend, I hope you have comfort in your father's memory. He may have chastened you in childhood—for this you ought to love him all the more. And though he were stern in manner when your youthful follies vexed him, or if he lacked,

at all times, the beaming love and tenderness that some display—yet was he your FATHER, your VERY FATHER still. What would you have been without him, and what the family without his fostering care? Children think little of their father's anxious thought, the deep responsibility of a father's rule; and when he is gone, they may find TOO LATE how much they owed him—too late to thank him, yet not too late to bless his memory and hold it dear.

And oftentimes conscience tells of actual faults—sad derelictions of filial duty—of many things that grieved a father's heart, and cause a blush to mantle in the cheek when he is no longer there to see it, and accept the tardy vow.

How oft, when standing at a father's grave, that solemn wording of the service may tell sadly and solemnly on some wayward son—"Thou knowest, Lord, THE SECRETS OF OUR HEARTS"—the secret things

of inward accusations. Such convictions embitter grief a thousandfold, and nought can fitly quiet them but GRACE—grace to confess the sin, grace to ask for pardon through a Saviour's blood, if, peradventure, sin done against an earthly father may find forgiveness at a heavenly FATHER's hand.

My friend, I speak to you as one who loved his father, and respect his memory (it may be that you dote upon his name), in fine, as one in need of sympathy, that in your bereavement you may be comforted. And say, Is there not ONE to feel for you, as mortal cannot do? Are you but willing, the God of heaven steps in to fill the empty space. Is He not "a FATHER OF THE FATHERLESS, . . . even God in His holy habitation"? (Ps. lxxviii. 5.) And YOU are FATHERLESS. Need you not still a FATHER's love, a FATHER's watchful care, a FATHER's counsel? and where can you find it but in the LIVING GOD? Are you ready to accept

the offer, welcome the privilege—ready to nestle beneath the Almighty wing? Can you call Him “MY FATHER,” “and not turn away from” Him? (Jer. iii. 19.) But this involves no trifle. It implies the depth and height, the breadth and length of GRACE. It speaks of more than nature’s possibilities. It tells of an adoption from above, of admission through the Spirit into the family of God, whereby the soul may cry, “Abba, FATHER!” (Gal. iv. 4.) Tell me, ARE YOU BORN AGAIN? (John iii. 3.) One greater than man hath said it must be so: “Ye MUST be born again” (John iii. 7). Without this, God cannot be your Father. Without this, no entrance can you have to heaven (John iii. 3). Without this, no heavenly parentage can you have to keep and comfort you. Consider it, I pray you—deeply consider it. It concerns your eternal good still more than it concerns your present sorrow.

And how then can you have that sweet adoption, spoken of above? The Scripture tells you, where it says, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John i. 12). It speaks of JESUS—of receiving Him, of believing in Him. He is the One to go to. Ask it of Him. Ask for the pardon of your sins through His most precious blood. Ask Him to give you the Holy Spirit (Luke xi. 13). He is called "The COMFORTER" (John xiv. 26)—to comfort sinners smarting for their sins—to comfort them in bringing them to Jesus; and, if thus they will be led, to comfort them in trouble, even in trouble such as yours. Can you afford to miss His services? Are you content to be without a Comforter like this? Then pray to have Him for your own, that by His means you may become a child of God, and find in Him a FATHER and a FRIEND.

THE LOSS OF A MOTHER.

OR is your grief, if not more deeply-seated (if possible), more tender still? Have you lost your MOTHER? Your MOTHER! Oh, what a name it is! Speaks it not volumes, untold in their realities, graven on the mind in letters that cannot be effaced? What other tie is like it? You owed your very birth to her—in the mystery of God, you owed her your existence, not only here but in the world to come, seeing that life hereafter is but the consequence of having an immortal soul, originally ushered into this world below. Who can tell how “in continuance” your members were fashioned in her, “when as yet there was none of them?” (Ps. cxxxix. 16.) And as you came forth from her, made of her very substance, a very portion of her flesh and bones, so your nourishment in infancy proceeded from her, as much a portion of her life as you your-

self. Say, then, who can describe the wondrous union of her with you, and you with her—your very frames knit together, as it were, in unity?

Your earliest recollections concern your MOTHER—how you were fondled by her, dandled on her knee, and taught to lisp your first attempts at utterance. She may have taught you to lisp the name of JESUS, and the sweet measure of your first-learned hymn. And as childhood grew, what petty care, or smarting pain, drove you not to her bosom, there to tell your sorrows and to weep your tears? And as youth advanced, found you not in her your ready counsellor and warmest friend? You know the words, “As one whom HIS MOTHER comforteth, so will I comfort you” (Isa. lxvi. 13). And had you such another earthly comforter? How soothing were her words! What tender reason in her arguments when counsel was required—some snare to be

detected and exposed, and inexperience to be warned to disregard the offer, and temptation to be unmasked!

And say, did manhood or womanhood relax the tie, the sweet maternal bond? Had you attentions to bestow—means of your own to show her hospitality—it may have been to cheer her widowhood, and comfort her declining years—was there not exquisite delight in all you did for her, as vainly you attempted to repay the debt you owed her, tender in kind, unbounded in degree? And, now she is taken from you, fondly you cherish the thoughts of all your latest intercourse, and love to retrace how, step by step, you tended her in her failing energies. Verily, in life and death, in presence or in retrospect, what can surpass associations with a MOTHER'S life—a MOTHER'S memory?

“ 'Tis now become a history little known,
That once we call'd the pastoral house our own. :

Short-lived possession ! but the record fair,
That memory keeps of all *thy* kindness there,
Still outlives many a storm, that has effaced
A thousand other themes less deeply traced."

—COWPER, on his "Mother's Picture."

And now she is gone ! I hope you are comforted. "No easy thing !" you say. No easy thing, I grant you. "Easy" did I say ? Not possible at human hands. But all things are possible with God. As lately mentioned, has He not deigned to use a MOTHER'S tenderness to represent HIS OWN ? (Isa. lxvi. 13.) Are these empty words, I pray you, or a simple verity ? Does He not practically say, "As once you nestled in your MOTHER'S bosom, so nestle now in MINE" ? Shall God invite in vain ? His breast be opened thus for nought ? Remember, there is no amount of human tenderness, that existeth not a thousand-fold in God. How dull and how insensible is man, to turn his back on this the best of friends, and disregard the only solid com-

forter! My friend, I trust it is not so with *you*. Depend upon it, if you mourn your dead, as one who has "NO COMFORTER" (Eccles. iv. 1), it is because you know not Him, who thus invites you. If you are joined to Him through faith and grace, full well I know you are not left to mourn alone; your God is with you, your Father, Saviour, Comforter. And thus you find your sorrow the occasion only of greater intimacy with the Friend, who "loveth at all times," with the Brother who is born expressly "for adversity" (Prov. xvii. 17). And, as you weep you are comforted the while, as they alone can be, who know the Lord; and thus you find that, even in a MOTHER'S death, sorrow may be turned to joy, and grace abound in sanctifying consolation.

But if those blessed words sound strange to you, and conscience tells you that you know not God after this tender fashion, I cannot say "Farewell," without entreating

you to lose no time in making the Lord's acquaintance (Job xxii. 21), not merely for your present sorrow, but for your future safety in the world to come. This trial may be sent for the very purpose of drawing you to God. Turn not away from Him that speaketh. Saith He not, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved"? (Isa. xlv. 22.) Believe me, there is a purpose, yea, counsel, in the chastening. "HEAR," then, "THE ROD, and Him who hath appointed it" (Micah vi. 9). In looking unto Jesus, you shall find blessing and peace and consolation. In giving attention to the rod, you will learn to bless the day that ushered in your sorrow and its remedy.

Mourner, may God have mercy on you, strengthen, teach, and comfort you! May even a MOTHER'S loss be more than compensated to you in having found a SAVIOUR and a COMFORTER in God!

THE DEATH OF CHILDREN.

OH ! what a world we live in ! How full of painful facts and harrowing incidents ! How many souls are ushered into life ; each one the offspring of a parent—each one tied to the native stock, by bonds of strictest intimacy ! And thus a parent sees himself multiplied and reproduced in “olive branches round his table.” Are they not bone of his very bone, flesh of his very flesh, bound up with him in all that is binding ; their interests identical with his own ; his energies expended on them, his thoughts devoted to them ? For them he labours, for them he lives ; their every pleasure twofold, both theirs and his ; their every sorrow reflected in his own ; his very life lived over again in theirs. In them, and with them, he plays with childhood’s toys afresh. With them, in thought, he goes to school once more, and learns his early lessons over

again. With them he joins once more in manly sports. With them he trains himself anew to exercise the mind, learns the first rudiments of business habits or professional lore. How closely dovetailed into one another, are a parent and his child, if only there be first the inclination, then time and opportunity, to cultivate parental ways—for, alas! this falls not to the lot of all, for where there is the will there may not always be the way. It is pleasant to see a father walking with his son, their very manner betokening a mutual intimacy, companionship in thought and feeling, like brothers in friendship and hilarity; yet neither child-like reverence nor parental dignity lost sight of. And if so with son and father, is it not the same with a mother and her daughters, only, if possible, more intimate the union still?

But such is life, and such the law of its realities in fallen man, that joys prepare

the way for sorrows, proportionate in degree. The closest unions are but preludes to the keenest separations ; so that, in life's pictures, each gleam of light is counterbalanced with its shadow ; and, sooner or later, sunny days are sure to usher in a night of darkness. And hence the fact of parents weeping for their CHILDREN, and refusing to be comforted—their very persons, as it were, smarting as though a limb were amputated.

“The flowers of spring have come and gone ;
Bright were the blossoms, brief their stay.
They shone, and they were shone upon ;
They flourish'd—faded—pass'd away.
“So, hidden from our sorrowing eyes,
Our young, sweet spring-bloom buried lies ;
One blast of earth swept o'er the flower—
It died, the blossom of an hour.”

—DR BONAR.

Reader, is this your sad condition ?
Have you lost a CHILD ? Whether son or
daughter, infant or of riper years, it is

much the same—in any case, a portion of yourself is gone. How sharp the visitation! How short its work! The grave has opened and has closed again; yet closed it not ere it received its tenant—till in its yawning space you had committed “dust to dust, ashes to ashes, earth to earth.”

How shrank your soul within you, as you heard those moving words, that grating sound upon the bier! And as you hastened home, wrapt in your tenderness, the thoughts of other children left to you (if indeed you have them), healed not the smart, nor seemed to make amends for your lost treasure. Oh, what a fearful wrench it must have been, to tear that branch from out its parent stem, never to grow and flourish there again! Oceans of tears shed o’er that silent grave would not avail to bring your loved one back to you. Long might you kneel on that cold ground, and yet, nor verdant sod, nor marble tomb,

nor modest headstone, could listen to your sobbing tale.

Think not, my friend, I blame you for your tears; neither does God reprove you. He knows that you must feel the wound inflicted on your sorrowing heart. He knows your frame, remembers you are dust (Ps. ciii. 14), and bids you seek Him in your tears, inviting you to tell your sorrows freely into His waiting ear. Believe me, this is the only remedy. Must the grave be visited unceasingly, and sorrow nursed till it become a morbid ailment, a wound unmollified with ointment, a standing sore; and all, because you sorrow to yourself, and not to Jesus—not to God? Poor mourner, no! This is not the path to consolation, nor yet to rightly exercised distress. Do you ask, “What would you have me do?” See LOVE in it, my friend! Is it not written, “GOD IS LOVE?” (1 John iv. 8, 16). It was GOD

that did it—God, who took your child. Shall we say that God is love in all but THIS? Have we found an end to His perfections—a limit to His love? Are there, then, exceptions to His perfect rule? No, God is love. Has He required of you what He Himself was not prepared to do? Has He not set you the example? Did God withhold His SON, His ONLY Son, for you and your salvation? Then say, could you withhold your child, when thus it pleased Him to ask you for what He only lent you for a season?

If you have grace, my friend, the grace of God in Jesus Christ, you only have to reason with yourself, to say “Amen” to God’s appointment. Your heart will bleed—it must, it will. Shall a blow be dealt, and the frame not stagger at it? This is as much God’s ordinance as the blow itself. Yet faith will rise above it, and while you weep, the rainbow tints of resig-

nation will cast prismatic glories on your tears. Visit not the tomb for mournful musings. If you can do it in joyful expectation of the coming day—**THE DAY OF DAYS**—the resurrection morn, when earth shall render up the righteous dead to meet their Lord, then you may go with profit to the tomb—not otherwise. Take heed, then, what you do.

But if this way be foreign to your mind, and you can only weep as those who have no hope (1 Thess. iv. 13)—if you cannot go to Jesus in your tears, nor take Him with you to the tomb—you need to be enlightened by the Spirit, not only for healthful mourning, but for eternal life.

THE LOSS OF A SON.

WAS it a SON? Perhaps your only son! How sad! how passing sad! His mother's darling—his father's stay; on him the prospects of the family hung—and, as it proved, upon a thread how slender! Not all your prayers nor tears could keep him here, nor yet the passionate refrain of friends, who said, "HOW HARD to lose him!" How simply stern, how sternly simple, the act of his removal! God had but to say, "RETURN!" (Ps. xc. 3), to gather to Himself his spirit and his breath" (Job xxxiv. 14), and straight the spirit fled—YOUR SON WAS GONE! A stone was thrown into the waters of mortality—enlarging circles marked the spot—no more that stone will meet the eyes till earth and seas give up their dead (Rev. xx. 13). Whether he died in childhood, or in expanding youth, or in the full-blown energy of manhood,—weighed

in the balances of life's contingencies—your sorrow ranks among the heaviest. How fondly you retain, as sad mementoes, the play-things that his tiny hands had grasped ;—or yet the implements of youthful sports, telling of many a gala day, exuberant in gladness ;—or yet again, more solid vestiges of mind and energy in science, letters, or in business ! These speak a language to the heart which none but you can read, eloquent in their stillness—awakening chords, silent in their solemn ditty :—

“ Can I supply youth's memories,
Or speak the words in childhood spoken ?
Can I replace the several ties,
Replace, return, the chord once broken ? ”

—DR BONAR.

How long is it since he died ? Well, you find that time is not a perfect healer. It may make you FORGET at least (and this is a humbling thought to dwell upon, a tribute to the wasting power of the fall),

but reconcile you to the loss it cannot. Skin the wound over it may, and does, with more or less oblivion. But this is not a creditable healing; still less to make you triumph in your loss, as you may, if you only know the secret: a secret it is—the secret of God's hidden ways. To those, who ask Him, He can and will reveal it.

Hark you, my friend! I know I make a great demand upon you. Grief loves not to reason or investigate—it has no heart to do so. Even if it would moralise, it often is in the romance of sorrow. If it would be religious, it is too often the creed of sentiment, and not the sober truth of providence and grace. Forgive me, Mourner. I have spoken of a SECRET, and now I offer you a text that throws a light upon the subject:—"THE SECRET OF THE LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant" (Ps. xxv. 14). Grace is a secret—providence the same; so are all

the dealings of God's hidden will. With Him the secret rests, and He alone can give the key to open it. Would you know it? Ask Him to unfold the mystery. Ask Him to show you why He took your son. Then will He show you His covenant of grace and peace—the secret of His righteous dealing.

He will teach you how a blessing is wrapped up in affliction, meant to enlighten you, to draw you near to God, to make you seek Him, if you know Him not, and give you lasting blessing for your present loss. Ask God if this is not His purpose. Well worth your while it is to solve the question. And oh! if your sorrow be the means of showing you YOUR SIN, of bringing you to JESUS, of causing you know the exercise of FAITH and GRACE; if it make you seek those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore—great reason will you have to thank Him that He even TOOK YOUR SON, that through

your depths of sorrow you might attain to heights of joy.

THE LOSS OF A DAUGHTER.

BUT is it a DAUGHTER that is gone? I feel for you, my friend. Great is your loss. You are wounded in a tender part indeed. You may have had many sons—at last a DAUGHTER came, and thus your fondest wish was gratified; and as you watched her in her growth and fond development, you lived on halcyon prospects as regarded her. And had she come to be your sweet companion—a help in household matters—in feeling, common sense, and judgment, your darling friend? Oh, who can tell the fascination of a DAUGHTER!—how she fills the eye, entwines the heart, shedding an atmosphere of light around her, filling the house with radiancy! What a blank her

absence caused when she had left you for a season! What joy you felt at her return! Oft, as she entered your apartment, your heart yearned over her. The very rustling of her dress enchained you, like music in your ear. Oft, as she tended you in sickness, or cheered you in your walks, you thought, "HOW COULD I DO WITHOUT HER?" But God thought otherwise; He makes not human possibilities the measure of His rule—and now SHE IS GONE!—in very deed NO MORE! Vain would it be to seek her in her well-known haunts. Call her—she answers not! Her name, the very soul of melody, falls empty on the ear—hollow, yet full of retrospective meaning—and sweet, how passing sweet, in notes of present desolation!

Forth to her grave, mayhap, you go with flowery wreath, the fairest blossoms you could gather—choice emblems of your lily that is taken from you. You cast it on the

tomb, and leave it there—for WHAT? To deck the body mouldering in the dust? Alas! it heeds you not, nor your sweet flowers. Or yet, what boots it to the spirit, that ethereal, disembodied thing, now far away? No more has it to do with earth, or earth's fair blossoms. What are the sweetest perfumes to the absent soul?

For WHAT, then, left you those flowers there? Simply to fade and DIE! To be the emblem of your lost one in corruption, as first they were of her in blushing life! And what is this, my friend, but to remind you of your misery—to make you feed on dust and ashes—to enter, as it were, within the tomb, and sojourn with the dead? And what does that advantage HER? Or does it stay your bleeding heart? If you must have flowers to take them to the tomb (to be consistent), leave them not there to wither. What a sight are faded flowers on a monumental stone! They hurt the eye,

distress the feelings, do violence to grief. You snatch them thence, to be replaced with others, only to mock you in their turn.

My sorrowing friend, think me not cruel (though unromantic, if you will), as one that ties you down to bare realities, and restrains your flight into the region of imaginative woe. I feel for you—I do, indeed. My natural mind would lead me in the same direction. If tasteful sorrow were consulted, I too would cast sweet flowers on the tomb. Plant growing flowers, if you will, to live and blossom there, if to your mind thereby the clods of the valley are made sweeter—sweeter to you ; not sweeter to the slumbering dead. But beware you rest not in them for your consolation. There is no lasting comfort in romance, however innocent it be. Romance may blossom as the rose, and fade as quickly—and what you want is LASTING consolation.

And, as you sally to the tomb, is there

not ONE who says, "Why lookest thou not to ME?" I pray you listen to that tender voice—the voice of JESUS. Comes He not forth "with healing on His wings," to cure your sadness? It is in the sunlight of that mighty orb, the Prince of Peace, "the Sun of Righteousness" (Mal. iv. 2), that you must seek the principle of blessing, peace, and consolation. But mark you, you must seek it in His wounded side—in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness (Zech. xiii. 1)—the fountain of HIS BLOOD. For you must know Him as a SAVIOUR, ere you can know HIM as your consolation.

My friend, may you know the luxury of heartfelt sin, looking the while to Jesus—for luxury it is to feel the tenderness of true repentance, while tears fall freely into His bottle (Ps. lvi. 8), all ready to receive them, and Jesus says, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee" (Matt. ix. 2).

Thus shall you feel the comfort of His sympathy. But you must seek it with earnest, childlike prayer, saying—

Lord Jesus, save my guilty soul !

Lord Jesus, take my sins away !

Lord Jesus, give me to see thy dealings as I ought !

Lord Jesus, come and comfort me !

The Lord receive your prayer, and may you have to say, I am the better for this visitation !

THE DEATH OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

BIRDS of a nest—children of one family—how close the tie ! “Sirs, ye are BRETHREN,” was the term once used to express earth’s strictest unity (Acts vii. 26), and “Love the BROTHERHOOD” (1 Pet. iii. 17), to denote a bond more binding still—the unity

of heaven—one Lord, one Father, one and the self-same Spirit, dwelling in all the family of God. If such the value of the word, no wonder that the bond is felt. Nursed by one mother, and from that fountain drinking in community of feeling, tastes, and dispositions; trained by one father's hand, breathing the blended atmosphere of parental influence, they are used from infancy to the same ideas and line of thought—their common centre the parental wing—their home a world within itself, distinct in feature from all other family communities. And thus, grown into one another by the law of nature, and knit more closely still by each event of family occurrence—in prospect, retrospect, and present fond association, they have an unity peculiar to themselves, their watch-word shared by none without the family.

It is pleasant thus to see it carried out, when brother clings to brother with hearti-

ness unfeigned, and blithe exuberance of feeling, each welcoming in each another self, a sure partaker of his interest in their common home—joint segments in the circle of its realities. Nature has ordained their unity, formed and cemented it; and nature exacts the due observance of the bond. Hence nought is more engaging than FAMILY AFFECTION, and nothing more painful, more repulsive, than for brethren not to dwell together in unity (Ps. cxxxiii. 1).

If this be so, how painful when the bond is parted, when brother is removed from brother, sister from sister, by the unsparing hand of death! Such bonds, we vainly think, were formed to last for ever; and so they would, but for that little, tremendous word—that subtle and pervading fact—the word, the fact, of SIN. Hence all the ruptured brotherhoods; hence all the scattered fragments of a body, once compact and flourishing; hence the spectacle of mourn-

ing households, and violence done to many a brother's heart ; and, Reader, hence the call for sympathy, and hence the need of consolation in this vale of tears. To you this forms my introduction, as a stranger-friend. Let me inquire the nature of your sorrow—in which department of the brotherhood you have sustained a loss. I fain would help you, if I can. I fain would enter the chamber of your sorrows, and, while I mourn with you, console.

Are you a BROTHER? and is it a BROTHER'S loss you mourn?

Check not your tears ; let them flow freely. To weep is not unmanly o'er a BROTHER'S doom. My friend, I know your sorrow. Who can describe the feeling of gazing on what was once a brother LIVING—now a brother DEAD ! Affection bids you look ; feelings unutterable bid you turn away. Death never seems more terrible,

the anguish never more acute, than when you thus behold a fellow-branch from off the parent stem laid low in icy stillness. No wonder that you feel it. Playmates from infancy, how many a sport you had in common! How many boyish pranks, how many a fond adventure you had together! Time came when you must leave the parental roof, both one and other, to launch upon the sea of life in this direction, or in that. His lot it may have been to sail upon the ocean on distant voyage, or yet to serve his time in foreign parts. Such separation for a season only served to make your mutual affection firmer still, as each re-union gave occasion for new-born vigour of fraternity, and the hearty grasping of a BROTHER'S hand spoke volumes unuttered and unutterable.

And now he is TAKEN FROM YOU, and, with him, all the circumstances of brotherly relation, and you are left to mourn him—

shall I say without a comforter? Not so, I hope. Nought can bring him back, it is true—and this is cutting to the flesh, and flesh suggests no consolation—and rightly so, since it has none to give. But there are comforts to be found, not in the lower atmosphere of earthly influences, but in the higher remedies of heaven. I have said it is not unmanly to weep tears of sorrow at a BROTHER'S grave—and say, Is it unmanly, in your grief, to seek your comforts in THE LIVING GOD? Is it unmanly to humble yourself before your Maker—to make confession of your sins to Him alone who has the power to forgive them—to seek the fountain of Christ's blood to take them all away? Is it unmanly to seek for wisdom from above—wisdom to see God's dealings in their proper light—wisdom to bear your trial as you ought—wisdom to make the best of what can never be undone—wisdom to plant your footsteps here

below, so that you fail not of reaching heaven?

Is this unmanly? Ponder it, my friend, and let your conscience teach you, if through grace it may lead you to the only consolation. But I forbear, lest you should deem me sermonising, and so I commend you to the grace of God. Ask Him to teach you, and thus to comfort you, as He alone can do.

Or are you a BROTHER in mourning for a SISTER gone?

This is a loss indeed, involving tenderness, deep-seated and refined. There is something in a sister's influence so sweetly penetrating, so all-pervading, unique in family association. How often they, who have no sister, envy those who have, from fascination of the tender bond, from the love and playfulness, and all the sweet realities, connected with it; fondness in-

dulged without the blinding influence of passion ; winning familiarity indulged with purity ; the interchange of manly courtesy and feminine attentions, without the risk of forming an attachment unhappy in the end.

Have I described in any wise what your SISTER was to YOU ? If so, how different was home when she was absent ! How different your own return, if her radiant smile was wanting at the door ! How you longed to spread before her the treasures you had gathered in your travels ! And many an incident you kept for her admiring ear.

How hard it was to keep a secret from her, if she was bent on knowing it ! Nor were you unwilling to be pressed by her mighty, loving importunity—so winning are a sister's ways. You never were her match in fond entreaty, or persevering aim. You owned her victor, and you loved

to have it so. Your childhood's years were dotted over with marks of her companionship; and while she mingled in your sports, you, neither of you, lost your distinctive character, while boyhood tempered down its roughness, and she could play, and yet be feminine the while. Such memories are touching, as they play with lurid sunlight over your bygone years. They impart to grief a tantalising character, their very playfulness making sadness tenfold sad.

“Truly this is a grief, and I **MUST BEAR IT**” (Jer. x. 19). So spake the prophet in his sorrow. Is this your language too? Oh! there is something desolating in events that cannot be undone—to have to set the face like adamant against obdurate visitations—to eat the bread of bitterness, and drink the waters of despair—to have the heart laid bare to the thorns and briers of unmitigated woe, the sharp occurrence of unlooked-for crosses. But you are not the

first to have to realise the Preacher's words, "That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered" (Eccles. i. 15). Among the members of your family, you ONCE could count your sister; now you can number her NO MORE!

My Friend, I have descended with you down the steps of poignancy, into the vault of gloom. Say, can you mount with me into the light of better thoughts and manly resignation? Yet it must be manliness after the model of the sanctuary, and not the stoicism of hardening against grief. Can you, then, mount with me that upward path? "How mount?" you say. Friend, there is A LADDER reaching from earth to heaven—from a world of sin and sorrow to the realms of peace. "WHAT ladder?" do you ask me. It is found in JESUS CHRIST, the sinner's SAVIOUR, and the sinner's FRIEND. Mark well its rounds,

ascending in succession, till they reach the skies. See the first step, so near the ground! Its name is FAITH—faith in the Saviour's blood—faith in His power to heal, through pardon of your sins to give you peace, and open up the source of consolation only to be found in Him. On that ladder—on its first inviting step—I pray you, plant your foot, in deep confession of your sins—in humble trust that God will give you grace; and then shall you ascend yet higher, step by step, into the regions of Christian resignation and sanctified distress. Turn not away, offended at my plainness. Call it not cant, unfit to comfort mourners. Ask God to tell you if I have spoken the words of plain, unvarnished truth. Ask your own conscience. Ask the solemn certainty of a world to come. Look well, and see if there be other paths to consolation, lasting and secure.

But, Reader, are you a SISTER, who has LOST A BROTHER? Yours, doubtless, is a trying case. If, in the brotherly-sisterly connection, there be something tender on the Brother's side, it is almost sure to be doubly tender on the Sister's part. Women are deeper in their sorrow, more unselfish than the men; and as their affection takes a stronger hold, the wrench of separation is the more acutely felt. In a brother's love there may be something of pride, in making of his sister—a pride of patronage, and conscious dignity in fostering the “weaker vessel.” But a SISTER's fondness is a simpler principle, less capable of being analysed—clinging, unquestioning, instinctive LOVE. And this, my friend, I doubt not, was your feeling for your Brother who is gone.

Was he a manly fellow, frank and hearty, reared with you in the nursery—from infancy your friend? Your little

plans were formed together in childlike confidence—none knew them but yourselves. When school-days came, what grief you had in parting with him! And while he bantered you, he kissed your tears away. You knew his raillery and boyish pranks; and when he teased you, you loved him all the more. And as he grew toward manhood, you leaned upon his arm, and, as you walked along, were proud of your protector. Brothers are often shy of telling, but not always so; and this your brother may have loved to open up his heart to you, confess his youthful scrapes, expecting your reproof the while. Gentle were your chidings, though sincere. Perhaps he bore from you what he would bear from no one else. His very faults endeared him to you, since they proved the sweet occasions of frank avowal, and of faithful love. Such retrospects are tender beyond expression, and, as you think of them, you weep. Mayhap you spoke to

him of JESUS, pointing out sin and its consequences, and the need of pardon from above,—for sisters mostly take precedence of their brothers in the path of life. But he may have been a character, from very infancy, commanding your respect, virtuous and amiable—a brother of brothers—such as you rarely meet. At any rate, he was your BROTHER still, in this respect or that endeared to you ; your roots entwined with one another, as kindred suckers from the parent tree. The severing was hard to bear—the disentangling of those fibres, who can tell how agonising !

I pray you, Mourner, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Has He not a right to do as seems Him good ? And can we say He ever does wrong ? You would not charge the Lord with having chastened you unjustly ! Had He not a purpose in it, holy and just and good—some lesson to be learned, something that you

required to know concerning Him—yea, and concerning self, and your condition in the sight of God? Will you accept a prayer befitting the occasion? It suited Job's necessity, and why not suitable to yours? It was thus the patriarch spoke, "*That which I know not teach Thou me*" (Job xxxiv. 32). Depend upon it, He has done it to make you think, as it is written, "Let us search and try our ways; let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens" (Lam. iii. 40, 41). God help you in the search, my mourning Friend, and show you why He chastens you. May He show you your true condition, and (if you are still without those blessings) grant you repentance for your sins, faith to believe in Jesus, the Holy Ghost to make you a new creature, and a life consistent with His holy will. Thus may He teach, and, in His teaching, comfort you. Then shall you learn to thank Him for His chastening love!

But are you a **SISTER** MOURNING FOR A **SISTER**? You have my warmest sympathy. How sweet the bond of sisterhood! Of all the affections of the human heart, it is among the purest; and so, because it is pure, intense in intimacy. In Heaven alone is perfect **UNITY**, because there alone is perfect **PURITY**. Discord alone prevails in Hell, because in hell prevails impurity. And thus, because the tie of sisterhood is pure (speaking comparatively of earthly things), it most resembles heaven, though still imperfect in its purity.

Am I not right? Does not your sorrowing heart bear witness that the bond was of surpassing unity? It may have been you kept not a thought from one another, so thorough was your partnership in mind and feeling. Who but a **SISTER** can satisfy a **SISTER** when thoughts are to be told, or plans devised, prospects to be looked at, events to be considered? And then it is

not as though two were pondering, but one—so close the mutual assent, as mind responds to mind. No effort is there in their intercourse,—their hearts, their tastes, their interests are one. See how they cling together, as, sitting in the summer-house, or walking by the way, the stream of loving intercourse rolls on. And how they fly to one another, impatient to express some novel thought, or to impart some fresh communication! How easily one hits the other's meaning! It is plain they have a language of their own, the speech of looks and smiles, with which a stranger intermeddles not,—their intent transparent to each other, compared with which words are but clumsy vehicles of meaning.

If such the sweetness of the bond, what must the separation be, when death, unlooked for, intervenes and snaps the bond in twain! My Friend, you know it, and your aching heart has many a history to

tell of former pleasures and of present pains,—how once you walked together, and now you have to walk ALONE—how once you had a friendly bosom to recline upon in weariness, a loving ear to listen to each tale of care, a SISTER's heart thrown open to receive your every pain. How sweet it was ! How passing sweet ! But now—that mournful now !—your thoughts return upon you with blank persistency, with no response of sympathy, no message from the inmost soul, no savour of your sweet companion, your other self. And thus you go, mourning your desolation,—each care, each sorrow, each perplexing thought, pressing on you alone,—your once loved partnership dissolved, your counterpart no longer here ! What tongue can tell your bitterness ! What balsam heal your wound !

WHAT BALSAM ! did I say ? I must retract my words. Deep as your wound may be, or fresh the sore, “is there NO BALM in

Gilead? Is there NO PHYSICIAN there?" Why then is not your health recovered (Jer. viii. 22)—the fever of unrestricted sorrow checked—the oil of heavenly peace administered? Is there NO GOD in heaven? NO SAVIOUR, JESUS, within call? Is there NO COMFORTER to heal the wound? Oh! think again, poor mourner,—think of Jesus and His tenderness—of Jesus, mighty to console! I prithee, go to Him. Tell Him YOU HAVE LOST A SISTER—your pet, your darling sister. Tell Him you desire to be comforted. There is nothing like A WORD WITH JESUS. Speak to Him, my Friend. Only take care you do it, prepared to take Him for your SAVIOUR, even Him alone—to look for nothing in yourself, no righteousness, no remedy, but simply look to Him to take your sins away.

MAKE FRIENDS WITH JESUS, I entreat you. It is your only remedy. If Jesus be once your Friend, you know not what help,

what sympathy awaits you, nor how He can supply the place of her who is gone. He forbids you not to weep for her—He bids you love her still. All He requires of you is that you fix your eye on HIM. Gaze on Him, then—the Lamb for sinners slain. Let your eye be filled with Him, yet shall your loved departed one not be hid from view. The more you look on Jesus, the more consoling, the more subdued, shall be your thoughts and memories. Your trial shall be made a blessing, and your sorrow turned to joy.

WIDOWHOOD.

THERE is a tie—of earthly bonds it is the closest—ordained of old by the Creator, when man was ushered into being (Gen. ii. 24). By nature its connecting elements have no connection; therefore most fit is it

to symbolise the union of Jesus and His Church (Eph. v. 23-25). For what has fallen man to do with heaven and the Lord—what union with the living God? Yet, in the mystery of the Covenant, the mystery of grace, sinners are joined to Jesus, and to God through Jesus, in a bond, compared with which all earthly unions are but poor indeed.

Yes, the bond of MARRIAGE, though an earthly bond, is one that passeth knowledge. Ethereal in its origin, it defies the microscope to trace its first beginnings,—to wit, what caused the latent goings forth of first attractions—how heart insensibly was knit to heart, enchained by loving sensibilities, the charm of personalities profoundly winning; and this, though seen by others, yet by the hearts themselves unseen and disavowed. And thus it grew, striking its roots irradicably into the soil of mutual prepossession—it may have been in spite of

characters dissimilar, and dispositions most discordant—till at last the vows were plighted, and marriage solemnised—with virtuous souls not to be dissolved except by death.*

The union thus begun, oft-times in spite of much that hindered it—(for what are bars and doors to penetrating love? And what the frowns of friends that would forbid the banns, or all the force of adverse circumstances?)—that bond, I say, formed in the inner chamber of the soul, drawing its life-blood from the fountain-head of sensibility, fed by the subtle passion that will not be ignored, when strengthened and confirmed by matrimony, displays a wondrous field for unity. Their interests, their

* The more the pity that a bond so sacred should ever be entered into recklessly, without regard to circumstances—oft-times in plain contempt of virtuous decorum, and disregard of strict, time-honoured rule, bringing foul dishonour on what was meant to be an honourable state (Heb. xiii. 4).

cares, no longer separate, but combined, exhibit a wondrous spectacle if analysed. Two hearts, two minds, two persons, acting as though there were but one; each circumstance of life weaving them more and more into a oneness undefined and undefinable. Looking to each other for their mutual guidance; no plan arranged, no purpose carried out, but with their joint consent; dovetailed to one another by each passing care; cemented, in their offspring, each to a second self;—no wonder that the bond is of the closest character. Less wonder still that, when a rupture comes, it should inflict a wound peculiar to itself, causing a blank unutterable, scattering to the winds the fond materials of that union, so wondrously begun, so delicately formed, so firmly put together, and which had hitherto defied each rude attempt to shake its permanence, till levelled by the unsparing hand of DEATH.

THE WIDOW.

AND are you indeed a WIDOW? That fearful word! Oft had you heard it—oft witnessed what it means in others. But now you have tasted for yourself its dread reality. What human hand is delicate enough to probe your wound, or weigh your present sorrow? I fain would leave you to “Him who sitteth on the waters-floods,” even to “Him who sitteth King for ever” (Ps. xxix. 10). Yet, as I have spoken to other mourners, say, could I pass by *THEE*? I feared to approach the page to be addressed to thee, knowing my weakness to console. But I should fear still more to leave thee unnoticed, unaddressed.

How long, then, had you lived together? A few short years? It may have been but months, or weeks, or even days or hours—for death respects not the thrilling happiness of a new-born pair. Or did you count

your married days by tens or scores of years, as some have done by more than half a century? And how did it happen? Did a cloud, at first no bigger than a hand, portend that soon your sky would be obscured? Or, like a thunder-clap, dreadful and ominous, instant in action, electric in discharge, did sudden, or all but sudden death, leave you a widow, desolate indeed? And as that lightning flash illumined the retrospect of years and joys unbroken, it was but for a moment—and then succeeded darkness ten-fold dark.

My widowed friend, can you cast your care on God? He careth for you—indeed He does (1 Pet. v. 7). I have seen Widows in their affliction (James i. 27)—in the very advent of their widowhood, when death had only just occurred. I have gone (when sent for) expecting to find them prostrate, oppressed, and dumb, unfit to exchange a word with God or man.

But lo! in certain instances, I have found them, like statues, it is true—in icy stillness—yet calm, collected, and resigned, able to discourse of their departed one, though unable, it may have been, to weep (their tears too deep to flow), sublime amid their sorrow—and I have come away surprised and edified. What, think you, was the reason of their calmness, their dignified submission, and wondrous peace? Simply that they LOOKED TO JESUS. They had walked with Him in their prosperity, ere clouds obscured their sky, and in their darkness He left them not to walk alone—His arm upheld them still. I only tell it as I have seen and known it. And this I also know, that what Jesus did for them, He can likewise do for you; and while I write, how know I but that it is already done?

Do you ask me how fared it with those widowed ones, as time rolled on? Did they

soon forget their dead ones, and return to active life, as though no blast of sorrow had swept over them? Did it thus appear as if their wound was slight and their affection transitory? Quite the reverse. As months went by, their sorrow seemed to deepen, and the blank to grow more void. Their earthly prop was taken, their earthly head was gone; and though the Lord came in to fill the empty space, yet ever and anon it opened up afresh, and they were made to feel their daily need of JESUS for daily smarting wounds. Believe me, they felt their desolation, not unmindful of the days when union was unbroken, and when fond affection, not anticipating ill, lived on as though it would be always so. Yet, leaning on Him who is invisible, and finding in His arm a sure support, meekly they returned to active duties, resolved that none should suffer at their hands by their indulging in selfish grief.

My friend, go and do thou likewise. An effort it may cost you, nor light nor short; yet, an effort that God can give you strength for, if you seek it at His hand. Nature can never suffice you for the task. It must be sought and found in Christ alone. Have you, then, fled to Jesus for pardon and for peace, resolved to know no righteousness but His—no other name whereby you can be saved? Then only can you walk, blessed in your widowhood; then only weep in comfort for your dead; then only be supported in all you have to do. Have you a family—children to educate and embark in life? How sinks your heart within you! All the charge now falls on you alone. What other cares you have I cannot tell. Perhaps their name is legion. But for them all there is one only remedy—"HAVE FAITH IN GOD!" (Mark xi. 22). He can fill the blank, give strength in weakness, light in your darkness. He can sweeten care.

Poor WIDOW ! hide not your tears from Jesus. Go weeping to His bosom. He will welcome you the more—the broken-hearted are His special charge. He loves to see them come. Knows He not what you feel—that your wound is deep, your spirit broken, your courage gone ? Knows He not your desolation, the aching void within you, refusing to be filled ? None is so tender, none so kind as JESUS. When He invites you to come for life eternal—when He reminds you of your sins and need of pardon—when He makes this the only door of consolation for your earthly woes, it is because He knows the value of your precious soul, and how little it would boot you, in the end, to have grief distracted for a season, only to have endless woe.

But, while He points you to the greater blessing, He does not disregard the lesser consolation, but, in giving you salvation, would also dry your tears. Then LOOK

TO JESUS ! Then COME TO JESUS ! He will not reject you because you ask for pardon in your earthly woe. Come in your "weeds"—come as a WIDOW—come with your torn affections, with your bleeding heart. Tell Him you want a SAVIOUR and a COMFORTER, all in ONE. Call on Him in your day of trouble. Surely He will hear thee, and fail not thou to glorify His name.

THE WIDOWER.

THERE is something deeply touching in the sight—a WIDOWER with his children ! See how he leads that little one along, clothed in its tiny mourning, the whole presenting a walking-group of desolation. Poor WIDOWER ! The wife of his bosom gone—the light of his eyes withdrawn ! His hearth left desolate ! His board deprived of her who graced it ! The light of his

dwelling turned to darkness ! His earthly comfort broken ! A blight upon his tenderest sensibilities ! A very wreck of what he was before this visitation, how can he but be desolate ! See how he goes from room to room, as ever looking for, and ever missing his loved and absent one ! He can scarce believe she never will return—that it was possible for all that bliss so soon to pass away ! He had thought she was his own for many, many years. Perhaps he had scarcely sipped the cup of married bliss, when it was dashed from out his hand with awful suddenness. It may have been, literally, by the lightning's stroke, as we have known it, or by some other form of instantaneous death.

“ Nay, 'tis not what we fancied it,
This magic world of ours ;
We thought its skies were only blue,
Its fields all sun and flowers.

“ But clouds came up with gloom and shade ;
Our sky was overcast ;

The hot mist threw its blight around,
Sunshine and flowers were past.

“Hopes perished, that had hung like wreaths
Around youth’s joyous brow,
And joys, like wither’d autumn leaves,
Hung from the broken bough.”

—DR BONAR.

And who is sufficient for these things?
See we not, in this, man’s heavenly origin
—to have a heart painfully tuned to sorrowing sensibilities, a mind susceptible of such racking grief?

Reader, are you a WIDOWER? I fain would comfort you ; yet, stranger as I am, gently would I tread, not to intrude too harshly on your privacy. Had you been taken, and she been left to buffet with the world, her loss in this respect had been still worse than yours—to lack the head she looked to, and the arm she leant upon—a woman’s grief imparting tenfold force to what she suffered. But you must have found that woman’s powers of endurance

exceed the man's ; and though her grief had been at first more passionate, yet in the end she would have endured more patiently. Besides, in some respects, the home is more disorganised, all its appurtenances more dismantled, when the Wife is taken—domestic hospitality more disabled—household concerns more thoroughly disjointed—the care of the children more at fault—and other contrarieties too many to be numbered. Happy, when these ills are more than tempered, and the widower's heart is cheered, by the presence of some kindly relative to keep his house and home! This is indeed a blessing among the choicest—a boon from God himself—sweet sunlight shed upon the clouds, which even then require the illumining of grace!

POOR WIDOWER! you have indeed sustained a loss, a crushing loss. You feel now, more than ever, that woman's presence, as WIFE and MOTHER, transforms the

house and home—makes it a living comfort; and that her loss drapes the whole household commonwealth in dreariness and chilling gloom. At every turn you miss her. Life seems not life without her. In how many ways she ministered, sensibly or imperceptibly, to a thousand little wants, daily and hourly besetting you—such service as a wife alone can yield! And now SHE IS GONE! and you are left to the drear mockery of waiting on yourself, or leaving a thousand things undone. The very texture of your life seems broken up, the warp and woof bitterly wrenched and torn, yet by no means disentangled—that they never could be—but fragments of both together still interwoven in their seeming separation—thoughts of the present refusing to be sundered from the past—the life, that is gone, re-lived and lived again in memories unceasing, present existence merged in many a bygone passage of your married

life, in fond associations flitting before the mind with loving importunity.

You had not realised, as now you do, how truly you were not twain, but one (Gen. ii. 24), and not "one flesh" alone—one heart, one mind, one taste, one feeling; one end in life, ONE EVERYTHING. It is bad enough to be alone when nothing else has been experienced. But to have been no longer single in the world, and THEN to be reduced to widowed solitude, is passing sad and withering. Such separations involve a world of suffering, known only to the sufferers, and to those who have experienced the same; and nought so plainly shows the wisdom and benevolence of God's decree that man should not "be alone" (Gen. ii. 18) as when we lose our treasure.

My widowed friend! God lent her to you for a time, a loan to be recalled at will. Not less you owe Him thanks than if He had lent her for a longer season. I have

heard of a husband charging God with cruelty for having snatched a darling wife away. A cutting dispensation, I allow—crushing to the spirit, grating to the flesh, clothing the man with grief unutterable. Yet, say, can God be charged with cruelty? Think who He is, my friend—God, the wise, the holy, and the good. Can we contend with Him, and say He deal unjustly? It is written, “He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men” (Lam. iii. 33). To the natural heart, I know, it is hard to credit this, and so to reconcile what seems irreconcilable. Again, it is written, “Why dost thou strive with Him? for He giveth not account of any of His matters” (Job xxxiii. 13). Not that this truth alone will heal the wound, and make men suffer meekly. Friend, you need something more—GRACE to receive the message—GRACE to see that love is wrapped in it—GRACE to “trust God,

though He slay"—GRACE to experience that God takes nought away, but He is able, yea, and willing too, to give much more than He has taken.

Do you say, "He has taken what was dearer to me than life itself. How can He give me what is better?" My friend, the matter rests with God, and not with thee or me. Ask Him to explain His meaning. Ask God to be "His own Interpreter, and He will make it plain." Ask Him to solve the difficulty, that He can chasten, and yet love the while. He has promised to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him (Luke xi. 13). Can you do better than take Him at His word? You little know what worlds of light and joy and peace might thereby open to you. OH! "TASTE AND SEE," and you shall find that "the Lord is good" (Ps. xxxiv. 8). Believe me, God is gracious. He waits to bless you, to turn your sorrow into joy, and gild

your desolation with transcendent brightness.

Go to the Cross, poor WIDOWER, and see how sweet to be forgiven; how passing sweet to be at peace with God through Christ, how glorious that GOD HIMSELF should be your COMFORTER.

*THE DEATH OF MORE DISTANT
RELATIVES.*

THE nearer to the heart, the warmer is the blood; and so, the nearer to the parental centre (the fountainhead of blood relationship), the stronger is the tie. Yet is the circulation felt in the remoter members, warming them in due degree; and thus kinsmen are loved and recognised, though not in the foremost rank of family connection. And, as in the body, the strength of circulation shows itself by warmth in the

extremities, so the strength of natural affection is proved in loving the remote of kin.

Much also will depend on force of circumstances, how far members of the same connection are thrown together by a train of binding influences. Thus an AUNT or UNCLE may be brought into the foremost rank, and invested with parental claim to love and dutiful behaviour; and, from like reasons, COUSINS may become brothers and sisters in virtual relationship and actual regard. And thus the amount of sorrow at their loss cannot be measured by the scale of strict relationship, as though the blood of family connection must rise to this or that degree in a thermometer, devised to mark such bare realities. Yet in part we may adopt the figure, and affirm that oft the fluid of connecting influence between more distant relatives, may rise to "summer heat" of nature's ties.

Reader, you may have had an AUNT who brought you up from infancy (it may have been an UNCLE, if not both; yet more frequently it is the former). Your parents may have died when you were young, and thus she may have filled a mother's office and a father's, all in one. Or your parents may have been in distant lands, and you were consigned for health and education to her tender care—her love in this enhanced, that she undertook an office not necessarily devolving on her, and incurred responsibilities exceeding the parental rule, as answerable for the trust committed to her. Parents have none to call them to account; their children are their own. If they misuse them, and they turn out badly, they seldom blame themselves for it. But if ill occur to mind or body under a delegated rule, how swift they are to lay it to the charge of her, who loved the children as her own! It oft is wonderful to see the rare

devotedness of such an one,—herself-forgetfulness ; her time, her thoughts, her energies, considered not her own ; life, health, and comfort, offered at the shrine of her adopted charge ; anxiety to discharge the trust reposed in her ; days occupied in toil, nights broken oft-times with distracting cares ; and while she feels parental fondness, she has to teach the children that the claim is not her own, that there are others they must love still better than herself ; and when her adopted ones have won their way into the very centre of her affections, knit to her as her very own, with aching heart she has to resign her charge, and (if she can) unselfishly rejoice that absent parents come to take her place. Thus, while she weeps, she must be as those that weep not, while with meek and loyal resignation she submits to have her heart-strings torn, nobly refraining from offices no longer hers, nor claiming affection dis-

paraging to the parental claim ; sublime in the true dignity of self-control.

Reader, you may have had a guardian angel in a human form, as thus described—and now you mourn her loss. Her early care of you, perhaps long discontinued, you never can forget. You never ceased to render her a filial reverence ; and now that she is gone, you see more clearly still how much you owed her ; and in the retrospect her character comes out in type of burnished gold. You well may weep for her—yet not for her, indeed, if she is departed to be with Christ, which is far better (Phil. i. 23)—but for yourself you weep, in paying homage to departed worth, and to your own character, as not forgetful of her claims. You may have parents still, or one or both, and be thankful to serve and love them, as the chief objects of your filial loyalty ; yet a fond concern for your departed friend becomes you well, and you may deem her

removal a call from God to number up your mercies ministered by her, His instrument of blessing—and you may mourn for her, as needing consolation. On some occasions grief has to be checked, there being much to feed its natural extravagance. But, in cases such as this, it has too often to be put in mind and cherished, in consequence of many things tending to forgetfulness of benefits received.

How oft, again, a Grandchild has to tell of second parentage and fostering care—of having found a second Father in a parent's sire—or Mother, once removed, in her who gave this or that parent birth! It is sweet to see parental offices, long since disused, fondly renewed and exercised—the nurslings nursed, as though they had been their own immediate offspring—youthful dispositions trained, and pastimes entered into, with all the freshness of the time when it was not children's children, but their own, whom

thus they tended. And when advice is given, and duty urged, by such advisers, how forcibly it comes ! And memory invests the retrospect of fond association with reverence more than filial, in respect of age and character more venerable than even a parent claims.

Who would not shed a tear for such a Friend removed ? And never is grief more graceful than when youth mourns the aged ones, removed and gone. Such patriarchs outlive too often the thoughtful care and kind attentions of a rising generation. Thus, the more the honour to those who, true to themselves and aged friends, can shed on such occasions a genuine tear.

But at times it is a GRANDCHILD'S loss that constitutes the sorrow, when tottering age is suddenly bereft of kind attention, and unremitting, tender care. On such occasions the very prop of life is gone, the staff on which the trembling hand was

staid; and sad bereavement brings gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Such grief requires peculiar consolation, equal, at least, to what a parent calls for when a child is taken. In one respect the loss may be greater, more poignant still the grief, because, the more advanced the age and bodily decay, the more the prop is missed, the more severe the desolation. My aged friend, if thus you mourn, I hope you have found a better staff than human help supplies—even to lean on JESUS and the LIVING GOD. How sweet the promise, “For I, the Lord, thy God, will hold thee by the right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee” (Isa. xli. 13). I hope you know it experimentally, for great your need of resting on the Lord. Your pilgrimage, it may be, is near its close, your days for needing earthly props well-nigh run out. Say, are you READY for the change? What are your prospects for the world to

come? Do you, through faith in Jesus, look for a "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"? (Heb. xi. 10). Have you found the Door of entrance to the city—even Him, who saith, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." I AM THE DOOR, by ME if any man enter in he shall be saved" (John xiv. 6, x. 9). Make no delay. The days are hastening on, "the evil days," when thou shalt say (if not already), "I have no pleasure in them" (Eccles. xii. 1). Ere "the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken" (ver. 6), see that you "have peace with God through Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1). Is "the grasshopper" even now "a burden" to you? (Eccles. xii. 5). Yet listen to its chirp, though wearisome it be. It is a preacher in its way, warning of the sand-glass well-nigh run down, speaking of death and what comes after. It bids you

look to JESUS, and be SAVED—to JESUS, and be COMFORTED.

But, Reader, you may have lost a relative of an order more remote, yet brought very nigh in Providence, which reckons not by human grades, but oft raises up in the outskirts of relationship a Brother's faithfulness, a Sister's tenderness, a Father's watchfulness, a Mother's care; and grateful love, which sorrows not by rule, but by a sense of benefits received, pays tribute to the dead, and mourns the benefactor and the friend, accounting that, the less the claim, the greater gratitude is due, and weeps accordingly. May mourners of this class be comforted! May their blank be filled by knowing Him who filleth all in all!

*THE DEATH OF INTIMATE
FRIENDS.*

RELATIONSHIP is of blood, a self-existent thing. We know its influence, and own its power. But there is a kinsmanship that claims a wider range, and asserts a power, at times more influential still. Yet it claims not kin with all, being too fastidious for that. It finds its kin in kindred spirits. It is the companionship of heart with heart, and mind with mind—its secret of attraction and cementing power, congeniality. Yet it renders no account of its proceedings, as to the nature of its affinities—how they had their origin—how heart became attached to heart, and man to man. Nor does it fail, at times, to be capricious in its likings, even to fraternise with objects most unlikely. Tastes may be different, and pursuits divergent—tempers and dispositions as wide apart as arctic from antarctic

pole ; and yet that fitful thing called FRIENDSHIP thrives on the soil of such discordancy, and strikes its roots irradicably. Yet, it is sweeter when more accordant in its elements, and the interchange of intimacy is adorned with harmony of tastes and feelings ; more edifying, too, to others, when spared the sight of worth enchained by syren bond of most unworthy partnership—fascinated by what it ought to spurn—dishonouring the name of FRIENDSHIP by its monstrous tendencies and wayward love.

But, however formed, there is a power in FRIENDSHIP, in some respects outvying relationship by blood ; yet, in its noblest forms, it abstains from doing violence to what it justly deems a prior claim, and abhors the thought of intercepting the affection due to kith and kin.

Now, JESUS had a FRIEND—one above others, whom He loved, to whom He told

His secrets, and to whom He gave the privilege of lying in His bosom. And if the Holy One, unfallen in His nature, the very soul of innocent propriety, could single out a FRIEND—if even in His bosom the mysterious principle was found, that close connecting bond of FRIENDSHIP—say, Is it not an honourable thing, an institution of man's very nature, and to be recognised as such?

The very nature of the bond engenders mutual confidence, a rare unfolding of the inner man, communications of wondrous intimacy. A man to meet his FRIEND—walk with him, talk with him—no one to share their privacy or mar their intercourse! The very thought inspires repose, and bygone tastings whet the appetite for more. But never is the bond so close, so binding, as when it is formed on principles transcending earthly ties—on fellowship in JESUS—fellowship with Him and one another.

No blood relationship they claim, yet they are joined in family connection of a higher kind—the family of God Himself, the domestic circle of the inner sanctuary, the bond of grace. Such unity can never reign on earthly principles. Heart must be joined to heart in ways that nature knows not of; and hence they hold communion with an intimacy otherwise unknown; feeling their bond to be eternal, destined to survive the earth itself and all life's concerns, while they hold communion on things unseen, but revealed and realised. If such the intercourse of Christian friends, both here and ever, no wonder that the bond is intimate beyond compare.

As little wonder is it that FRIENDS, even on earthly principles, should mourn each other's loss, and feel a pang inflicted, lasting and severe. Kinsmen in thought and fond association, they miss each other painfully. When a FRIEND is mourned—a BOSOM

FRIEND—the pang is felt in the inmost recesses of the ethereal man. Mental companionship receives a blow; and there is nought that feels the severing of a bond, like mind allied to mind through a long tract of intercourse, closely sustained and fondly exercised. Thrice blessed is it when natural ties and fond companionship are joined in a BROTHER OR SISTER FRIEND. When such companionship is beautified with grace, it is the very acme of earthly oneness.

Reader, have you LOST A FRIEND—the chief companion of your mental powers, an inmate of your heart? When nigh, how oft you sought his company!—When absent, companionship, if possible, more intimate was kept with ink and pen. But now your intercourse has ceased, and you are left, a mourner of no trifling order—you feel a blank unutterably void. To find another such were hard; to seek another such by

rule—perforce to make a friend of some one or another to supply his place—say, could you do it? Your heart rejects the thought. The link that bound your hearts together refuses to be forged on such an anvil. The train of subtle circumstances that made you friends cannot be reproduced at will. Such friendship is a solitary thing. If a brother dies, you may have a brother still, and at the family-board you find your consolation. But a FRIEND—a BOSOM FRIEND—leaves none behind to take his place, for friendship goes not in groups of family connection; and when it dies, it leaves nor kith nor kin to represent it with the friend who is left to mourn.

May I ask you, Reader, if you are comforted, and where you seek your consolation? You feel the truth of what Solomon has said—"A FRIEND loveth at all times" (Prov. xvii. 17). You say, "That pictures forth my Friend, yea, to the very life. His

love was constant and sincere—in woe he ever wept with me, and in prosperity he made my joy his own.” Again, I quote from Solomon—“A man that hath friends must show himself friendly; and there is a FRIEND that sticketh closer than a brother” (Prov. xviii. 24). Does this make you think still more of your departed—in how many ways he proved his friendship? Brothers may have stood aloof in your adversity, nor offered help which was at their command; but he proved better than a brother. He ne’er forsook you; he stuck to you throughout. Did I say better than a brother? Yet not than every brother. Blessed be God, brothers there are who minister as friends and brothers, in concentration of all that is generous and kind, whether in brotherhood or friendship—all honour to their bounty and faithful love!

My Friend, I question not your loss either

in kind or in degree. But have you ever sought the FRIEND, the Heavenly Friend, that loves as no one else can do? Think WHAT a FRIEND! From heaven He came to save you, to bear your sins "in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24). What other friend has done, what other friend could do, as much as this—to suffer for you on the Cross? Say, can brother stick to brother, or friend to friend, after a sort so friendly? Your friend, you say, loved you at all times. Does not JESUS do the same, and in an infinite degree? What moment do you sin not? What moment have you loved Him, thought of Him, as you ought? And yet what moment has He not thought of you? In your prosperity he thought of you. He thinks of you in your present grief. He knows your sorrow, and even now would be your Comforter. One only thing He waits for—that you should SEEK Him as your FRIEND. Would you know

His friendship's worth? Consider what He has done to prove Himself your FRIEND. This you require to know for a double reason—the pardon of your sins, and for present consolation. The day is coming when earth shall pass away—when earthly friendships shall have no further place—when all must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad (2 Cor. v. 10). Then make the JUDGE your Friend. “KISS THE SON, lest He be angry” in that great day, “and so you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” (Ps. ii. 12). Then seek a FRIEND IN JESUS. Faithful and true you will find Him—faithful in life—faithful in death—faithful to all eternity!

There is a class of FRIENDS, whom not to speak of were to do foul wrong to friendship's sacred name. I mean, faithful, at-

tached domestic SERVANTS. That the tie is recognised in many families is amply proved by the notices we read, from time to time, in the public journals, of grateful masters thus recording that they have lost a FRIEND. But, on the whole, the bond is little recognised, too little felt, and the law of mutual obligation strangely overlooked. How many consider that the obligation thus conferred is solely on the part of those who pay the wages, forgetting all the while that the obligation, to say the least, is equally conferred by those who yield the service! If servants cannot live without a master to feed and pay them wages, could masters do without domestics to do them service? And is the servant humbly to thank his master for his wages, and the master not to thank the servant for his offices? And yet, comparatively speaking, this is seldom acted on; and if masters so little understand their duty, can we

wonder if servants are ignorant of theirs? If we forget that they have flesh and blood, feelings and faculties the same as we, we must not be surprised if they, in practice, resent the injury and yield unwilling service. And yet, how much we owe them, if they are faithful to their trust! Can love be bought with money? Can kind devotedness be paid for across the counter? Can honesty, untiring interest in their master's cause, faithful adherence in trying circumstances, nights of tender watching in the sick-room, and other services cheerfully rendered day by day—say, can these be rated at a market price? These mark not the menial, but the FRIEND—and friendship is too precious to be bought and sold. And what, if the good be mixed with evil—if faithful service be attended with things unsavoury, as fits of temper, or eccentric ways? Much as we blame it, can we wonder at it? If masters are imperfect, can

they expect perfection in their servants? When we engaged them, did we expect the promised wages would purchase freedom from infirmity, and insure that they should not be like ourselves in sinful tendencies? Or could they engage, for money, to be transformed at once, and be no longer liable to sin? I say not this to palliate their faults, but simply to guard against expecting what can be hardly done.

Again, how close the union between faithful servants and their masters—in daily intercourse more intimate than with most relatives and friends! Companions in our joys and sorrows; alive to every family event; sharing our interests as their own; consulted in domestic matters; oft taken into counsel in graver matters; trusted to act for us in difficulties; treated as confidential FRIENDS—how much is there to form a bond of life-enduring strength and intimacy! How much, when death re-

moves them, to make us mourn their loss, especially if they have died in service, or, it may have been, exempt from work, ending their days among us in tranquil honour and undefined respect—their little chamber the rendezvous for many a meeting, settled or improvised—where many a family secret is discussed—where coming family events have cast their shadows forward in the presence of that genial sun!

What a blank occurs when such a FRIEND is taken! It is not merely that a friend is lost, but an institution gone, as little to be recalled as to make the family lore, that there was coned, a matter of the present, and not a fact accomplished.

My Friend, your sorrow does you credit—your tears are rightly shed, and honourable. And as you grieve not according to the scale of earth's relationships, or grief conventionally felt—as your sorrow is not prescribed by such formal rule, so neither

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ON SUDDEN DEATH—DEATH FROM ACCIDENTS, ETC.

DEATH is always solemn; but doubly so, when sudden, even when known before as probable, from causes seen and recognised. To find the spirit fled—the body that had harboured it untenanted—your friend no

—that livi and the fire
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not have
we in listen

Oft have we heard, "A
and thought we had set our seal, "ay

truth most plainly realised. But in
nis, as other things, too oft experience
goes for nought, and straightway we forget
the tale of frail humanity. We are told of
the death of one well known and cherished.
"Impossible!" we say; "I saw him but
an hour ago—surely you are mistaken!"
Straight to the house we go, to know if it be
true. Ah! we need not bring the servant
to the door—the darkened windows have
their tale, and straight they tell it; they
seem to say, "The wind has passed over
him, and he is gone"—"the place that
has known him shall know him no more"
(Ps. ciii. 16).

Well, the first gift of life was instantaneous—"GOD BREATHED!" How simple and concise! "God BREATHED into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7). And can we wonder if God at times as suddenly withdraw the breath so promptly given? Yet life appears so firmly settled. From day to day the wheel of nature rolls so plausibly. We think, "Surely, the lungs that breathe to-day must breathe to-morrow, the eye that saw to-day must see to-morrow's sun"—and so we reason in our blindness, and forget God's possibilities. Yet we have to do with One who knoweth our infirmities—He remembers that we are dust (Ps. ciii. 14). God will not judge us for the shock we feel on such occasions. Could it be otherwise? Say, is it possible to check the horror that comes over us—to drown the cry of anguish that escapes our lips, when we see life thus suddenly extin-

guished? Or when we are called to see what others have discovered, the pain is hardly less. And when the chilling fact is brought before us in its stern reality, how is the circulation checked, the breath suspended, life driven back upon itself with fearful shock to mind and body, leaving, at times, traces of lasting injury.

That man should die is not a mystery. Simply it is God's appointment, in sequence of the fall. He has foretold us of it, and we see His word unceasingly fulfilled. Man is a **SINNER**. He has earned the wages of his sin (Rom. vi. 23)—what wonder, then, that man should **DIE**? Yet practically it is a mystery, that life should discontinue, and that what was once so full of animation should suddenly collapse, and be no more a sentient thing. The wonder varies, too, according to the circumstances. In extreme old age we are prepared for it; nor is it strange that a machine worn out

by use should suddenly refuse to work, and cease its functions altogether; but even then we are surprised to find that all is over.

Or you may be told that your friend or relative will die a sudden death. Day after day you go, prepared to find him gone. Yet if a message come to tell you he is dead, you say, "Is it really so?" But, at times, it happens that no warning has been given. Health may apparently be perfect—nor friends, nor medical attendants may have thought the contrary. Your friend may have retained a marked alacrity, and gone his round of occupation with a vigour that seemed to promise a long continuance of life—and then, to receive the tidings of his death, must ever be a dread surprise. We have heard of preachers in the pulpit, judges on the bench, merchants in their counting-houses—nay, of the votaries of pleasure at a ball—thus summoned with-

out a moment's warning of "prepare to meet thy God." Oh, what a fearful thing is **SUDDEN DEATH**. How solemn in its warnings!—alas! too often unobserved.

Reader, have you thus lost a relative or friend? Are you sufficiently yourself to receive a word of sympathy? Fain would I commune with your shattered sensibilities—fain would I still their throbbings with the anodyne of sweet composure and meek submission to a Father's will. But what is man? No sorcerer's wand has he to raise, to allay the trouble—no voice wherewith to bid the winds and waves of your distress be still. But there is One who says, "**BE STILL!**" He hath said it to the stormy sea, and it obeyed Him (Mark iv. 39). He says it in His Word to every troubled soul, "**BE STILL, and know that I AM God**" (Ps. xlv. 10). How many a mourner has received his consolation from those impressive words! "The floods"

had "lifted up, the floods" had "lifted up their voice; the floods had lifted up their waves," as though to overwhelm the mourners—but they have found that "the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea" (Ps. xciii. 3, 4).

Believe me, Reader, there is no quietus like intercourse with God. You find it soothe you to tell your sorrows into a human ear, and while you tell them, somewhat of your grief subsides. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come to thee." OPEN YOUR HEART TO GOD—open your heart to JESUS. Fling wide the portals of your thoughts, that He may enter in and still their agitations. The startling shock of this your visitation was Jesus knocking at the door, asking for entrance to your spirit; it may be that you discerned it not. The wind, the "great and

strong"—the earthquake and the fire wrought no impression on the Prophet's soul (1 Kings xix. 11)—and so, amid the tempest of the shock, you may not have perceived the Saviour's call. But listen—is there not now, as with the prophet, "A STILL, SMALL VOICE," inviting you? May you have grace to listen and obey the call! In gentle accents it appeals to you. Open your ear to hear; not only hear, but answer it.

What do you with a friend who comes to commune with you? You tell him what you feel. So must you do with JESUS. Tell Him the shock you have sustained. Tell Him your inmost feelings. He will listen to you patiently, kindly, feelingly, as He alone knows how to feel. Only make trial of it, coming as a sinner in need of pardon—as a mourner requiring consolation. Come in sincerity. You will not repent it, but find a calm come over you,

unutterably sweet. Thus may your agitated heart be charmed to rest!

“A living, loving, lasting word,
My listening ear, believing, heard,
While bending down in prayer.
Like a sweet breeze that none can stay,
It pass'd my soul upon its way,
And left a blessing there.”

—A. L. WARING.

But there are many chapters in the book of sorrows—volumes, I should have said; and many a torrent, from many a mountain side, combines to swell the river in this vale of tears. Among those sorrows few are more trying than when a friend or relative DIES AT SEA. The body cast into the deep appears a greater desolation than burial in the graveyard; no sod to cover him, but, in its stead, the restless ocean. We had rather heard “earth to earth” than of committing the remains to the uncongenial deep. We think, too, of the departed one, that he lived not long enough

to see his native land once more, and that a stranger hand should close his eyes in death. This is indeed a sorrow, and much it calls for consolation.

But it is sadder still when SHIPWRECK has occurred, and shroudless, coffinless, your friend met with a watery grave. True, death is death, however it may occur; and after death it matters not whether a man died in his bed, or made the stormy wave his dying pillow. But how different it seems (and justly, too) when there is time for preparation, compared with the awful suddenness and crushing gloom of death by shipwreck or foundering at sea! And then a thousand thoughts occur, the saddening results of human reasoning. Had the ship been better manned, less deeply laden, or steered more wisely, the danger had been averted, and your friend been saved. And thus we stem the tide of overruling Providence, and find it hard to swim against the stream!

But, saddest of all, when a ship is lost at sea, and it is never known how, when, or where it happened. What fluctuations of hope and fear, as afflicted relatives from day to day expect the tidings that never come ! Such suspense is truly agonising. It were almost a lesser trial to know for certain that the worst has happened, than to be kept alternating between hope and fear, as false reports arise from time to time, only to be contradicted, racking the mind upon the wheel of flitting, harrowing alternations. Deeply the mind is exercised, whether the ship was burned ; whether run down by other craft, and both had perished ; whether they struck on sunken rocks, or came into collision with an iceberg ; whether they sunk at once, or lingered long between life and death, as leaks increased upon them, at last to sink to rise no more. How hard to stop such agitations, and not to toss the mind with suppositions never to be set at rest ! It

seems injustice to the friends, thus darkly taken from us, not to dwell with fond, yet vain inquiry as to the nature of their unknown end. Nor were it wise or kind harshly to check the exercise, as being a safety valve to minds ready to burst with rankling desperation.

Mourner, has the time elapsed that was allowed for the longest exercise of reasonable hope? And are you with painful effort brought to the conclusion that all is over, veiled in the darkness of a crisis undefined? Or are you still indulging a languid hope, unwilling to believe that the flame, now flickering in the socket, must shortly be extinguished by hopeless gloom? However that may be, I almost shrink from offering consolation, lest you should think I under-estimate your woe.

But to all the class of mourners above alluded to, I would simply say, "Humble yourselves beneath the mighty hand of

God " (1 Pet. 5, 6). Lie low before Him, and say nothing, if you will ; you will find none so discriminating, none so delicately kind as He. He knows your sorrow—its heights immeasurable, its depths unfathomable. He knows that utterance fails you ; that silence is the last refuge of your jaded heart. Lie low before Him, and say nothing STILL. He will wait for you to speak when utterance comes. Yet leave not the position. Seek not the return of self-possession in other presence than the Lord's. Lift your eyes in chastened adoration, in speechless prayer ; and though it be with a listless, vacant gaze, look for relief to HIM, if haply the pent up conflict of your mind may find a timely outlet. Yes, God is merciful, tender in sympathy, mighty to console!

“ Still in the solitary place
I would a while abide,
Till with the solace of Thy love
My heart is satisfied,

And all my hopes of happiness
Stay calmly at Thy side."

—A. L. WARING.

Mourner, betake you to the BIBLE. There you will meet with God, meet with the promises, meet with a bleeding Saviour, meet with consolation, meet with a tender Friend. Diligently, prayerfully consider what it tells you. Let it but have free course in you ; it shall comfort you indeed.

DEATH ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE has its woes peculiar to itself, in thinking of a friend laid low in gory sadness. What agonising moments pass between the first reports of battles—the awful TELEGRAMS received, with harrowing silence as to the special dead ! With what anxiety the list, at last, is conned, to know its dread contents ! With trembling eyes, half-dimmed with dread suspense, half-questioning their information, you spell, and spell again, the looked-for, would-be absent

name. Yes, yes, it is so! The letters, in blank precision, taking no denial of their veracity, make up the identity too surely—and you go with faltering steps and sinking heart, to break the sad intelligence. For a time you are cheered by thinking that he died, fighting for his country; but that does not, nor can, allay the smart, and grief WILL have its course, unvarnished by the air of faulty satisfaction, mocking your palsied sensibilities.

Forgive me, Reader, if I have opened your wounds afresh. Yet full well I know I only speak in words long since familiar to your sorrow; and I have done it, hoping to bring before you the only healing for your wound. Distracting cares point to their own remedy with urgent claim; and so your anguish points you to JESUS and His Cross, as the only balm for your distress. Thought after thought arises of other remedies, but you must seek it at the SAVIOUR'S hand. No

wound too deep for Him to probe it; no gangrene too inveterate for Him to charm away; no train of circumstances too harrowing for Him to tinge with consolation. You may think your grief incurable—that calmness is irrecoverable—that you can never view the past without cankering despair. Believe it not, my friend. Trust not your feelings; they are incapable of reasoning at the present time. Rather believe the FRIEND who says, “COME UNTO ME, . . . and I will give you REST” (Matt. xi. 28).

I have not touched on many grounds of sorrow, on many other ways of sudden death. The time would fail me to recount the many heads of such disasters—alas! how frequent in a bustling world! The head must fail from being “waters,” and the “eyes a fountain of tears” (Jer. ix. 1), through the demands enforced upon them with such sad persistency. But there is

One whose sympathy is ne'er exhausted,
whose power to comfort ne'er decays. In
all the multitude of woes He never fails.
He is the abiding consolation. Ye mourning
ones, smarting from this or that variety of
woe, seek your relief from Him. He sends
not one weary one away—

“It is not as Thou wilt with me,
Till, humbled in the dust,
I know no place in all my heart
Wherein to put my trust ;

“Until I find in Thee, O Lord,
The lowly and the meek,
That fulness which Thine own redeem'd
Go NOWHERE ELSE to seek.

“Then, O my Saviour, on my soul,
Cast down, but not dismay'd,
Still be Thy chastening, healing hand,
In tender mercy laid.

“And while I wait for all Thy joys
My yearning heart to fill,
Teach me to walk and work with Thee,
And at Thy feet sit still.”

MAN IS BORN TO TROUBLE.

YES, "man is BORN TO TROUBLE, as the sparks fly upward," the one as inevitable as the other (Job v. 7), and why? The saying is correct, we may be sure, seeing whose Word it is that saith it. "Affliction," it tells us, "cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground" (ver. 6). Crops have their seasons, every one; and when the time is come we look for harvest. Man, through sin, has sown the seeds of his own afflictions, sown to the flesh, and of the flesh has reaped corruption (Gal. vi. 8.) In this respect, afflictions spring immediately from earthly causes, the sure result of sin, which strikes its roots, and yields its fruit accordingly. Yet, in another aspect, it springs at once from God's command. No matter-of-course procedure bringeth it to pass. God's sovereign will disposes it. The time and

form of the affliction hang on this alone, and that, on principles unknown to man, and unintelligible. Some pass their days with little trouble; others are in the furnace constantly. "Known unto God are all His ways," and "He giveth not account of any of His matters" (Acts xv. 18; Job xxxiii. 13). But this we know, He doeth all things well, though we are apt to charge His ways with inequality (Ezek. xviii. 25) because they beggar human expectation. Yet He acts on special grounds, and not in wantonness, nor upon arbitrary principles, apart from our deserts. Thus various reasons may be given why man is born to trouble, and why BEREAVEMENT stalks abroad, spreading its desolations far and near. God helping us, let us try and seek them out.

Has it ever struck you, Reader, how the number of man's days has been defined by God in heaven? At first, men lived to

near a thousand years; and Enoch seemed to die scarce in the prime of life, though he had numbered three centuries and more. So it continued to the Flood, and Noah died almost as old as Adam and Methuselah (Gen. v. 23; ix. 29). But then a rapid fall took place in man's earthly life. Look how persistently it fell (see Gen. x.), till, in Moses' time, it had reached its present limit of "threescore years and ten," varied to fourscore years (or even more), according to God's good pleasure (Ps. xc. 10). In this we see not the immediate hand of God, and impress of His power? Why did man live so long at first? BECAUSE HE WILLED IT. Why, then, did length of days decrease so rapidly? Simply BECAUSE HE WILLED IT. And having so far descended the scale of diminution, why did it stop at its present limits, and not go on to plain extinction? BECAUSE HE WILLED IT. The bodily machine, so "fearfully and

wonderfully made" (Ps. cxxxix. 14), was, doubtless, qualified to work as long as at the first, IF HE HAD WILLED IT SO; and had its decline resulted from inevitable causes, no reason was there why it should not wear out altogether. Oh no, at every stage we see God's all-directing hand ordering the ratio of life's decline as long as so HE WILLED IT; and when the appointed limit was attained, He staid the wave of diminution.

Life is a dream—a span—a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away (James iv. 14). And yet it is a wonder that it lasts so long, seeing the risks it is exposed to. And the wonder is, not that we hear of death so often, but that it comes not oftener. This does not rob BEREAVEMENT of its smart; yet it is truth, and worthy to be considered. When rightly viewed, it tends to resignation, and may make us thankful that Bereavement did not come before.

Yes, "MAN IS BORN TO TROUBLE." He inherits trouble by his very birth. His sinful nature calls for it; bodily frailty predisposes for it; liability to trouble is inbred in his bones. You mourn your relative or friend, and you do well. Yet, while you mourn, do justice to God's laws. Do justice to the principles inherent in your nature, and to the consequences involved in it.

Consider, then, your trouble in the view of NATIVE SIN. As a SINNER, you were BORN TO TROUBLE, born to BEREAVEMENTS, as naturally born to trouble as to inhale the air you breathe. What moment is there that you breathe not? But how many, many moments have you had exempt from trouble? Thank God on this behalf, for every moment free from trouble is a boon we had no right to look for. Mourn you ON YOUR FRIEND'S ACCOUNT, that he was taken from his family, and life

so soon cut short? But was he free from SIN? Could he plead exemption from the universal rule? Was he not BORN TO TROUBLE—BORN TO DEATH? He came into the world to DIE. Who can dispute the justice of his doom, or who impugn the season of its execution? God has a right to take His creatures at His will. He knows the time that each man has to live, and acts accordingly. Could you but search the register on high—the register of births, foreknown and settled—the register of deaths, as accurately defined, and closely fore-ordained—you would find that your departed one was not defrauded of a single moment of the time allotted to him in the Doomsday Book; that he had had his share of earthly joys, also the time of preparation for eternity, with the helps and privileges suited to the same—in fine, all that an all-wise God saw fit to give—all that was consistent with His holy will.

I pray you, take this thought to God, and ponder it before Him. He only can enable you rightly to view, and meekly to receive it. To hide yourself in God through faith in JESUS; to lose your will in His; to resign all wisdom of your own—this is the only path to resignation sure and true.

But is it FOR YOURSELF you mourn? Do you think you are hardly dealt with, your pleasure unjustly interfered with? And, though you would not say it, do you feel that God had dealt more kindly with you, had He spared your friend? Think me not harsh. Question not my sympathy. Deeply I feel for you—indeed I do. I reverence your tears, and fain would enter the inner chamber of your sorrows, if haply I might comfort you. But, my friend, can you rebel when God appoints it? Can you say, “I DO NOT DESERVE IT?” Were you not BORN TO TROUBLE—born to LOSE YOUR FRIEND? Search your own nature through.

Investigate your life from first to last. Let actions, thoughts, and words, be scrutinised. Are you an exception to the universal rule of sin? Has there been a moment you could say, "I AM NOT A SINNER?" Then could you claim exemption from the consequences? You are born to trouble, entitled to it by your very nature, that title more than strengthened by your act and deed. Acknowledge it, my friend—to God acknowledge it, and not to me. To humble self before Him is the way to happiness, the road to consolation. Take, then, the glass of faith—the glass of calm investigation—the glass of accurate perception—and, by its means, endeavour to read your heart aright. Turn up the soil thereof, and you shall find therein A SEED DEPOSITED, the seed of TROUBLE, destined to spring up and bear its bitter fruit.

And say, is there not MERCY in the rule—in God's universal law? Would it be mercy

to leave sin unrequited here—to leave the sinner unreminded of his destiny—unwarned by trial, sharp and solemn, of what awaits him if he repent not and believe in Jesus? Freedom from trial were inconsistent with a fallen world—a violence to principle divinely ordered.

Thank God, my friend, thank God that He afflicts you, to bring to mind your lot, your duty, your deserts. It is His way of blessing, by bringing you to see your SIN, your need of JESUS, and His precious Blood. What would it profit you to go unchastened all your days; never to have to weep; never TO LOSE A FRIEND; never to experience the aching void of separation; and, after all, TO PERISH IN YOUR SINS; to have had the company of friends on earth, and lose the company of God himself in heaven? Then is there not mercy in affliction—unbounded mercy, that men be

weaned from earthly things, and seek a better heritage to come?

“Source of my life’s refreshing springs,
Whose presence in my heart sustains me !
Thy love appoints me pleasant things,
Thy mercy orders all that pains me.

“Well may Thy own beloved, who see
In all their lot their Father’s pleasure,
Bear loss of all they love, save Thee,
Their living, everlasting treasure.”

—A. L. WARING.

There is another view of it—another phasis of the truth that MAN IS BORN TO TROUBLE, which it were not wise to disregard. I mean the PERISHABLE NATURE OF OUR MORTAL FRAME. LIFE is a wondrous thing. How it goes on from day to day, as long as nothing happens to arrest its course! And yet on what a slender thread it hangs! How frail its tenure, as regards either ourselves or those we value! Ten thousand causes are abroad at any time to

injure or destroy it. A breath suffices to blow the candle out. The veriest trifle (as we call it) of an accident may fatal prove, when least expected. Our every organ is confronted with what at any time might prove destructive; our every element of life exposed to influences as subtle as themselves: at any moment the gaseous fluid of disaster may drown the vital principle irrevocably. What binds these instruments of evil, that they hurt us not at every moment? What stays the wind of fatal influences, that it pass not over us with blight upon its wings? Nought but **THE HAND OF GOD**—nought but that thing inscrutable, called **SPECIAL PROVIDENCE**. But, could our eyes be opened to see the threatening dangers all around, and trace the agencies employed to shield us from the ill—the hair-breadth issues from the liabilities that beset our path, we might well be lost in wonder and adoring praise. It is in mercy that we

see them not—that the veil is on our eyes. We could not otherwise take a step or draw a breath, exempt from anxious care and dread forebodings. We could not part with friends but for a moment, or send our children for their daily walk, without some sad presentiment of evil; and, awful as is the visitation of fatal accidents or sudden death, it is a lesser trial, in the end, than to have the mind racked by the probabilities of aye impending ill.

Then, Mourner, THINK! Your friend was BORN to all those agencies of which we speak—BORN to the shock of influences let loose upon a fallen world. God lent him to you for a season. It was a loan, to be revoked at any moment in God's good pleasure. And, seeing how frail the tenure of his days, the tenure of your hold upon him, can you wonder that his life is gone, that God employed one or another of those agencies to take him from the earth? Men call it ACCIDENT, because

it comes at times unlooked for, and in ways unknown, now by some casual form of violence, now by infection caught imperceptibly, yet in its effects too evident. But God rides in the chariot of uncertainties (to man uncertain, yet not so to Him) to effect His purpose settled long before. Long, did I say? Devised from all eternity, planned ere the world began. And thus no man can die before his time is come, and these uncertainties of harrowing events and startling pain do but embody the settled will, and graphic calculations of the Lord.

Weep for your friend. It is not forbidden. Jesus wept for His. Give him the meed of sorrow. Give him the guerdon of affection still. Pay him the tribute of a heart that feels his loss. Yet, in your grief, forget not the higher claims of Him with whom you have to do, lest in your sorrow you kick against the pricks, against the mandate of unerring wisdom, and of sovereign love.

PRAY FOR THE SPIRIT. He can open vistas of perception that you know not of, and give you grace to acquiesce in this painful illustration of the truth that "MAN IS BORN TO TROUBLE AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD."

THE WORLD A SORRY COMFORTER.

THE Preacher speaks of some who "had no COMFORTER," because, as we infer, they sought it not aright—on earthly, and not on heavenly grounds. And so it is too often with the BEREAVED; they try to cure their broken hearts with human nostrums, the quackery of the world, which mocks the patient, and does not heal him. And thus, when sorrow comes, mourners are urged to seek their consolation in worldly pleasure, and to drown their recollections for a season, only to return more bitterly at

last. As well expect a cure from sheer intoxication, as banish sorrow thus. "MISERABLE COMFORTERS" are they who recommend such remedies to distract your grief. Pleasure can only make a man FORGET his sorrows; and as waters wear the stones by ceaseless droppings, so a continuous round of pleasure may in time induce complete oblivion. Yet this, to say the least, is a DISHONOURABLE way of stifling sorrow—advisedly I use the word.

It does DISHONOUR TO THE DEAD, that you must needs FORGET him, and for his memory substitute the theatre, the race-course, or the whirling dance. Could he but know the fact, or tell the feelings of another world, would he commend your conduct, or consider it a compliment to be banished thus from mind? Through pleasure you forget your friend. The giddy spectacle, whatever it may be, hides him from view. It must be so. Such objects are not tran-

sparent, but opaque, with their many sorts of deadening influences. Not so the atmosphere of grace. Its clear expanse forms no impediment to vision—quite the reverse. It gives you objects to survey, transparent as itself. It invites you to fix your eye on JESUS, Himself the Sun of that transparent medium—Himself the object to bring out its properties. This will hide nothing from your view that may be safely looked upon. It hides, indeed, objects of earthly vanity, as they again obscure the Cross. But it enables you to see more clearly, as you ought to see, all lawful objects of consideration—will teach you to weigh their consequences, discern their right proportions, and look upon them as they are looked upon by God. May you thus bear your sorrow HONOURABLY, and know the dignity of sanctified distress !

It is also DISHONOURING TO YOURSELF not to confront your sorrows like a man. It

implies a want of courage, the absence of proper self-command. There is something wrong, you may be sure ; for is it decorous, is it manly, thus to cheat the soul, to hide yourself behind some passing vanity, rather than face the sober truth? It proves you want a higher principle, the thews and sinews of a braver purpose, a mind nerved against unworthy refuges, a buoyancy to rise above the wave.

Yet I mean not STOICISM, casing the mind with adamant, suppressing sensibilities, ignoring natural affection—its ground of resignation fatalism, unconscious or avowed ; a dogged resolution to suffer on ; a sullen tribute to some principle of harm, deified, yet not divine ; too blind to trace, too proud to own, the hand of the Almighty. Stoicism is not courage. There is nothing noble in its composition. It is rather cowardice, making its would-be hardiness a refuge for its lies. It dares not

see affliction in its proper light. Oh no ! the strength of which I speak is something higher. It has no place whatever in the natural man. It is the offspring of GRACE. It brings its powers and its consolations from another world.

In some there is a way of sorrowing, nor seeking its distractions in the world, nor yet hardening itself in stoicism ; feeding in calmness on its sensibilities, clothed in the mantle of a mournful dignity, attending to life's duties with self-denying purpose, exhibiting a quiet resignation to the blow. Yet it lacks the principle of GRACE, the principle of glad compliance with the will of Heaven ; sorrowing, yet able to rejoice, distressed yet cheerful ; not merely saying, " This is a grief, and I must bear it " (Jer. x. 19), but counting it a privilege to feel a FATHER'S HAND, rising above the instrument, to see A FATHER'S LOVE, serene in the elasticity of grace. It is thus

the bread of bitterness is turned to sweetness, and the path of sorrow trodden with unfaltering steps, because of consolations that the world knows not of, and because the everlasting arms are underneath, surely, sweetly, sensibly.

Thus fortified and taught, a man may look BEREAVEMENT in the face, undaunted. No need has he to seek a refuge in the world, and drown his sensibilities in pleasure. As little need to arm himself with stoicism. He meets affliction not as a foe, but as a friend, the bearer of a message from the Lord. To turn from facing it would be to scorn its mission, to hide himself from God.

Yet trust not in any power of your own. Would you do honour to yourself aright, you must have ENGRAFTED principle, ENGRAFTED courage—a self within, entirely distinct from what by nature bears the name—A NEW CREATION in heart and mind,

in principle and powers (2 Cor. v. 17). May you thus be qualified to have a true respect for self, and have a self worthy to be respected !

But, most of all, to seek your comfort in the world is most DISHONOURING TO GOD. Man was intended to hold communion with His Maker, in HIM to find his consolation—to have his Maker for his FRIEND. But Adam fell, and, with the fall, there came a sad ESTRANGEMENT between him and God—an estrangement, shared by his posterity down to the present hour. And thus, my Friend, why take you not your sorrows to the Lord? Because you are ESTRANGED from Him (except you haply know Him) and count Him not your FRIEND. Conscious of sin, you sullenly avoid your Maker, and seek your comfort in the world.

And is it to be always so—that God, the kindest and the best, should be a cypher to your sorrowing heart—that He alone should

be the subject of studied disregard? Mayhap this sad bereavement was sent to teach you better things—to show you **WHERE** true comfort is to be found, and make you see your danger, if you treat your Maker as a thing of nought, and systematically pass Him by. Haste to be wise. Haste to be childlike with the Lord. Haste to be at peace with Him through a **SAVIOUR'S BLOOD**. Haste to regard Him as your **COMFORTER**—to treat Him as your **FRIEND**.

And if the world can give no real consolation, as little can we gain by borrowing its **GRIEF**. “**THE SORROW OF THE WORLD WORKETH DEATH**” (2 Cor. viii. 10). And this it does in many ways. It means grief, irrespectively of God—sorrow without a comforter—sorrow indulged in to satiety—sorrow pent up within the breast without a safety-valve—sorrow with nothing to relieve it—a mind fixed on its own distress—nothing to break the continuity of wearing

thought. Such sorrow wears the flesh—it dries the bones (Prov. xvii. 22), secretly undermines the health, openly tells upon the countenance, induces gradual decay—and thus, eventually, worketh death. How many, hence, have died of broken hearts! How many have committed suicide! And all, because they had no COMFORTER! Had they only been at peace with God—had they confided to Him their sorrow—their grief had found an outlet, and their life been saved. And then they might have said, “I shall yet praise Him who is the HEALTH of my countenance, and my God,” (Ps. xlii. 11).

Ask the physician, and he will tell you how fever is oft averted by a peaceful mind. Can they but avert the fever, the patient lives. And what will keep from fever like a mind at peace with God? Contrast with this A BROKEN HEART—and from what does it proceed? From some hidden canker, left to

prey upon the mind, unchecked, unremedied—some wound unmollified with ointment (Isa. i. 6)—some worm that feeds upon the root, sapping the constitution, eating out the stamina of life.

Such is **THE SORROW OF THE WORLD**. I pray you, Mourner, give not way to it. Ere morbid feelings root themselves eradicably, bestir yourself. Shake off the viper that would invest your heart. Awake to consciousness and healthful thought. "Is any afflicted, **LET HIM PRAY**"—thus saith the Scripture (James v. 13). Let him **SPEAK TO GOD**—to **HIM** unfold his grief. This at once unfolds the spring that moves the safety-valve, and lifts the sluice of healthy sensibilities. Speak, then, to God. You are "**AFFLICTED**"—in the very state described, the attitude of prayer. At any rate, my Friend, **SPEAK YOU TO GOD**. Catch not infection from the world, to sorrow unto death.

The sorrow of the world works death in yet another form. Instead of leading you to God, it takes you FURTHER FROM HIM—further from grace—FURTHER FROM CHRIST—further from hope—further from life eternal. Instead of softening the heart, it hardens. It engenders a deadened spirit, a conscience not awake to suitable impressions—it paves the way for death—death here, and death hereafter. Then take a lesson, Mourner, if such is your temptation. Shun worldly sorrow, which eateth as a canker. Seek peace. Seek sweet serenity. Seek life for soul and body in the simple remedy of Christ, the balsam of the soul.

*NO SOLID COMFORT IN RITES
AND CEREMONIES.*

IN your bereavement seek not your comfort IN RITES AND CEREMONIES and formal prayers. These may divert the mind and fill it with the form of worship, but solid consolation they cannot afford. Can vaulted aisles dispel your sorrow, or surpliced choristers, or dim religious light finding its way through painted glass? Can these speak peace, or say to the winds and waves of sorrow, "Peace! be still"? SAY it they may—but to do it is another thing. Nor prayers intoned, nor Amens chanted, nor the full measure of choral services, can fill the aching void. It is but filling it with emptiness itself. It is the husk without a kernel—an ornamented body without a soul—a voice without a meaning—a shadow without the substance—professing sym-

pathy, with no power to console. I speak of formal services—the mere routine of showy worship and formal prayer. Among the lovers of such rites there may be worshippers devout and true, who look to Jesus through them all, and find their consolation. But all such services, persisted in from formal rote, can neither honour God, nor avail the worshipper, either for piety or consolation. “God is a SPIRIT, and they that worship Him must worship Him in SPIRIT and IN TRUTH” (John iv. 24). The very soul of worship is God received into the heart by faith—faith in a Saviour’s blood. The soul of worship is to look to Jesus Christ, dwelling in the heart by faith (Eph. iii. 17). The soul of worship is the Spirit opening your eyes to see, your ears to hear—making you a new creature in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. v. 17)—bringing you into fellowship with God, that you may have the mind and learn the language

of the sanctuary, and thus be one of those of whom it is written, He "seeketh SUCH to worship Him" (John iv. 23). But if you look no higher than the desk or pulpit—are your aspirations bounded by choristers and their practised strains—if a dim devotion fix your soul on the outward trappings of the sanctuary, the gorgeous vestments of the men that minister, with alb and cope, and chasuble and stole—the clouds of incense from the thurible—the lighted candles on the table (the altar falsely called)—and sensuous influence of glass and chiselled stone—is THIS to worship God in spirit? Is this the way to Him who keeps the keys of consolation, and opens it to whom He will. For, of this be sure, that vital worship and solid consolation go hand in hand.

Reader, inspect the nature of your worship, and your bearing in the house of prayer. Are you there TO SPEAK TO GOD

HIMSELF—not merely to repeat responses, leaving it to those, who minister, to think the thoughts and transact the business of true devotion? Do you feel that you have missed your object in the sanctuary, if you have had no sensible communion with the Lord? He that finds the Lord finds life (Prov. viii. 35)—finds peace, finds hearty worship—finds genuine consolation—and, having tasted these, can have no appetite for empty forms that only cheat the soul.

But have you put RITES AND CEREMONIES to the test? Then tell me honestly if they really comfort you. For the moment they may divert your sorrow, but the pealing organ and the swelling choir have no abiding influence on the soul. When once they are over, a void occurs—your sorrow rushes in—and so, to cheat it, you seek them yet again. It is a transient effect, a mere sensation after all, skimming the surface slightly, striking no roots of consolation,

and, therefore, fruitless of relief. How different the consolation that Christ affords! There is something solid in it, something abiding, something to bear away. You have it, sitting in your house, or walking by the way, as well as in the sanctuary. Are you confined with sickness, and for years unable to frequent the house of prayer, this blessed principle abides the same. Could you fill your chamber with wreaths of incense, and a surpliced throng, or hear intonings by the hour, would it really aid your worship, minister consolation, or edify your soul?

Then let me ask you to desist from surface work, and dig the soil of sober truth—to renounce the shadow for the substance, to be satisfied with NOUGHT BUT CHRIST HIMSELF. Hide you in HIM for righteousness. Betake you to Him for your consolation. Enfold yourself in Christ as in a garment. Take Him wherever you go;

keep Him wherever you stay ; live in the temple of His presence. Then may you find true consolation in the earthly sanctuary. Then will its services be sweet, because Christ is with you in them all. Then shall the preaching of the Word sustain you, and then your consolation shall abound. Thus will you love a service conducted simply, and shun the sensuous ornaments, and gaudy trappings, of mistaken zeal.

It is strange to see the straits that men are put to in their sorrow—the straws they catch at for their consolation. On the tombstone I have read it, that the dead received his BAPTISM on such a FESTIVAL, and on the eve of such another festival he DIED. Poor consolation, if you come to sift it ! 'What has it done for the departed one ? What could it do ? Could it save his soul, that he was born or baptized on EASTER DAY, and died at WHITSUNTIDE ?

If so, sadly have we misinterpreted God's Holy Word. It does not recognise such doors of entrance to the kingdom—such titles to celestial glory. The only door of which we read is Christ. He saith, "I AM THE DOOR." "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John x. 9; xiv. 6). How vain to look for comfort in such empty things! Look from the tombstone, look from the festival, to God's sacred Word. There is nothing to cheat you, nothing empty, there.

Others betake themselves to PRAYERS FOR THE DEPARTED. But what can this avail? If a man have perished in his sins, can prayer reverse the doom? Can prayer restrain the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched? (Mark ix. 44, 48). Is it not written, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust STILL; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy STILL; and he that is

righteous, let him be righteous STILL; and he that is holy, let him be holy STILL"? (Rev. xxii. 11). Can prayers affect the sentence? Can **MASSSES** pluck a soul from hell, or purgatory, falsely called? Believe it not, my friend. "In the place where the tree falleth, **THERE** it shall be," whether it fall heavenward, or toward hell (Eccles. xi. 3). **LIFE** is the time to save the soul, the only season to transact the business of eternal life—the only period, through grace, to qualify for heaven. Then sin not against God, nor cast discredit on His Word, by prayers for which you have no sanction.

But have you reason to believe your friend is happy—that his last end was like the righteous—that even now he is gone to be with Christ, which is far better? (Philip. i. 23). If so, can he require your prayers, even if they were admissible? Could they make God better to him than

He is already—the Saviour's bosom more refreshing—or heaven more glorious? Souls perfected above (Heb. xii. 23), to need the prayers of sinners upon earth! Oh, monstrous thought, not to be harboured for a moment—a contradiction too gross for reasonable minds! If your friend was righteous, he is righteous STILL; if he was holy, he is holy STILL. What more does he require? What more do you require on his behalf? With reverence I say it, what could God do more than He has done—to give HIMSELF to him—to give him HEAVEN? What, then, can he want with masses or your prayers?

Others there are who think to HOLD COMMUNION WITH THE DEAD, and thus console themselves. But what warrant have they for the thought that disembodied spirits should return to hover in mid-air over their sorrowing friends? A bad beginning, one should say, of heavenly rest, forthwith

to leave the bosom of the Father, and have to parley with a sinful world! A paltry compliment to Jesus, to exchange His presence for intercourse with the dearest earthly friend! Nor were it only for a little season—for when would mourners wish it to subside, and thus part company with their disembodied ones? Whether this intercourse is sought in the unassisted fervour of a wandering mind, or at the hand of practised “MEDIUMS,” profanely called, my Friend, it is a mockery, to call it by a gentle name.

Some build the notion on the text, “Are they not all MINISTERING SPIRITS, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation”? (Heb. i. 14). But WHO are the ministering spirits here described? The context speaks of ANGELS, and of them alone. But men catch at words, and because departed souls are SPIRITS, they make the text apply to these, reading the Scrip-

tures through the "glasses" of their own romance, in disregard of sober reasoning and Scripture rule.

GOD is a SPIRIT (John iv. 24). ANGELS are SPIRITS (Heb. i. 13, 14). DEPARTED SOULS are SPIRITS (Heb. xii. 13). But are we to confound the several offices of God, and angels, and disembodied men? We think not of ascribing to the creature, whether men or angels, the office of the Creator. As little may we intermingle the offices of angels and departed men. Their nature is distinct, and so their office. From the beginning of the world, angels have been links of intercourse between God and man, "ministering spirits," to convey His messages or effect His purposes; agents of Providence, yet not commissioned to act the part of ministers of grace. Now, can we, at our pleasure, impart an angel's office to a disembodied friend, and charge him with a message to ourselves, because it suits

our jaundiced purpose? If so, we do it on our own responsibility—on the fiat of our own authority, and not the Lord's.

Again, angels are perfect in their kind. No sin has severed them in twain, body and soul apart; and hence they always have retained a capacity for office. Not so with man. On earth a fallen creature, after death a disorganised creation, one-half of self embodied, the other mouldering in the grave—say, is it consonant with reason, according to the principle of things, that a disjointed being should be employed as angels are? The spirit of a man, departed to be with Christ, is doubtless glorious, and happy in its glory. Yet, in another sense, it is the time of its humiliation, as bearing witness to the Fall, that caused its separate condition. It awaits a season of activity hereafter; it waits “for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body” (Rom. viii. 23), that, in organisation

perfected, it may fulfil whatever the Lord may have in store for it to do. Therefore, till Scripture tells you that your departed ones can return to watch and tend you, believe it not, nor seek with fancies of your own to supplement the Word.

Besides, God bids us look to HIM for consolation and spiritual influences. Nowhere does He encourage us to seek this in the creature, living or dead. His glory He gives not to another (Isa. xlii. 8), no more to separate spirits than to graven images. His glory He gives not to the angels. We read not of their ministering to the soul, or taking the office of the Comforter.

And see you not DANGER in the thought? Could you trust yourself to deal with God in fairness, and not to make your (so-thought) hovering friend your chief, your only comforter? The Lord disclaims such partnerships. Give Him but half His homage, you give Him none at all. Uncon-

sciously you think to find more tender sympathy from your departed friend. But think again. Who is so kind, so tender, as the Lord—tender as Jesus—whence, as from a fountain, the springs of human sympathy are all derived?

“No other comforter I need,
If Thou, O Lord, be mine ;
Thy rod will bring my spirit low,
Thy fire my heart refine,
And cause me pain that none can heal
By other love but thine.”

—A. L. WARING.

Nor rest in LIVING friends, however sound, however gifted, however kind. God sends them, I allow, to comfort you, and speak a word in season to your soul. But He sends them as His instruments, not to usurp His place. However sweet their intercourse, however much it savours of the sanctuary, make not an idol of the instrument. It is not your real strength, the staff of your

support. Lean upon God, and ever find one moment's contact with the Lord of more avail than hours of converse with the creature. Nor forget that it is written, "I AM THE LORD ; that is My name, AND MY GLORY WILL I NOT GIVE TO ANOTHER."

*"WHAT I KNOW NOT, TEACH
THOU ME."*

My sorrowing Friend, observe, I pray you, the words that form the heading of this chapter. They were spoken on occasion of a chastening from the Lord (Job xxxiv. 30-32). They are suited to all afflicted ones. In thy bereavement are they not suitable to THEE? If a friend touch you in the street, you turn instinctively and say, "WHAT WOULD YE?" Now, the Lord has TOUCHED you, laid His hand upon you, and is there not some purpose in His touch?

Does He not intend to teach you something that you know not, or to impress some lesson learnt imperfectly? Turn you to Him that chastens you. Ask Him to teach you what you know not. Ask Him to give you a mind to apprehend, a heart to close with what He teaches you. Have you "the hearing ear and seeing eye"? "The Lord hath made even both of them" (Prov. xx. 12). Therefore from Him we seek them, and with the Psalmist say, "Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me, . . . on Thee do I wait all the day" (Ps. xxv. 5). Then bear with me while I question you a little. Think me not rude in my inquiries. I make them because I wish you well. Besides, all awkwardness is spared you, for, after all, you answer to yourself and not to me, and thus become your own inquisitor.

I ask you, then, DO YOU KNOW YOUR NATIVE SIN—how deeply it is ingrained in you—how it has poisoned the source of

innocency, its fatal influences flowing in your veins with deadly circulation? I ask you if you see it, for "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jer. xvii. 9); and though the fact is patent, except you are enlightened from above, you cannot see it.

I met with one who knew it not. So blind was she that she denied her sinfulness altogether. She would not believe that she had broken the least of God's commandments. Stoutly, yet quietly, she repelled the charge against her innocency. Well, what was I to do? I said, "My friend, we differ. Who is to decide the matter? Clearly NONE BUT GOD. He knows how matters stand better than you or I. Ask Him, and He will show you. Tell Him of our conversation. Say to Him, 'O God, AM I A SINNER, or AM I NOT?' Ask it in sincerity, and He will surely make it known." On my next visit I inquired,

“And now, what think you of yourself, my friend?” “Oh, sir, I find that I am not so good as I have thought myself to be.”

“What!” I replied, “have you found out that you are A SINNER?” “Yes, sir, and a great one too.”

“How came you to this knowledge?” I inquired. “Oh, sir, I ASKED GOD TO MAKE IT PLAIN, and He has done so of a truth. I am indeed a SINNER.”

She was a woman meek by nature—singularly meek. She said she had never been out of temper in her life, and I believed her, she was so very placid, and outwardly, I doubt not, in all things well behaved. Yet she found, in spite of this, that in all things she had offended, even as we all (James iii. 2). Her case I mention that you may follow her example (whether your case quite resembles hers or not), and simply ask the Lord to show you your true condition.

If you allow that you are a sinner, I

would ask another question. Can you say, "OF SINNERS I AM CHIEF?" The great apostle said it of himself (1 Tim. i. 15)—can you? You may reply, "How can I think so? Are there not others worse, much worse than I—men who have disgraced themselves before God and man, as I have never done?" So used I to reason of myself, but God has taught me to see it otherwise. Do you ask me how? He led me thus to consider it. "Is there a moment since my birth that I have done my perfect duty either to God or man?" "NOT ONE," I was compelled to own. Then said I to myself, "Can there a greater sinner be than one who has been imperfect, one who has been a sinner, EVERY MOMENT of his life?" And when I thought how grace and knowledge had enhanced my sin, I found it easy then to say (and feel it too), "I AM THE CHIEF OF SINNERS."

What think you, Reader? If you went to

ask a servant's character, and you were told, "He does NOTHING thoroughly—NOTHING as I tell him," would you think it a good character? Would you engage him as your servant? And what has God to say of YOU and ME? Could He give us a better character? Could He call us other than "unprofitable servants"? Could He say that we had done "that which it was our duty to do"? (Luke xvii. 10). Then tell me, Reader, can there be greater sinners than you or I—and by our own confession? The reason of this very chastening, this sore bereavement, may be that you should learn to see it thus; and, touching this very matter, that you should say, "THAT WHICH I SEE NOT TEACH THOU ME." You have sustained a bitter loss. But if thereby you gain the knowledge of yourself, your gain will far exceed your loss, and then shall you discern its only consolation.

Let me ask you another question, closely

connected with the former one—Do you see THE SAVIOUR in His proper light? Have you learned to see Him as He is? You say, “I believe that Jesus is the Son of God. I believe that He came into the world to save sinners. I believe His death upon the Cross. I own the power of His blood to cleanse from sin. I believe that, as He died, so He rose again, ascended into heaven, and that He will come again to judge the world. WHAT MORE do you require?” If this be your belief, your CREED is right. But let me ask you, is this head-knowledge only, or does it affect the HEART? Have you acted on your creed? The Scripture saith, “WITH THE HEART man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom. x. 10). With the heart we sorrow—with the heart do we rejoice—and with the heart we feel. Apply this to your profession. Is your heart engaged in it? Does your repentance tell of heart-work? Are

you really sorry for your sins? Have they ever cost you a moment's sleep, a moment's pain? Are you anxious about your soul—so anxious, that nought will satisfy you but to have your sin put away? Is there heart-work in your faith? Can nothing please you but to have Jesus for your own? Is your heart melted when you think of Him, when you consider His love in dying for you? Are you wont to say, "Give me Jesus, or I die—oh, give me Jesus, or I perish in my sins"? Now, this is heart-work, and this you need to prove yourself in earnest and really in the way.

Reader, have you closed with JESUS—laid hold upon Him—determined not to let Him go till He pronounce you clean? (Matt. viii. 2). What boots your creed, except you see Him thus? To see Him merely in His doctrine, in the externals of belief, is much the same as not seeing Him at all. You require to see His loveliness—the beauty of His

person, as the sinner's Friend. It is to see Him as the true Physician, to crave His remedies, and hang upon His power to heal. It is to know Him PERSONALLY, to hold communion with Him, to lay before Him all that concerns your soul. Mayhap, He took your friend that you might know Him thus—that you might say, 'Lord, wherefore didst thou touch me?' 'THAT WHICH I SEE NOT, TEACH THOU ME.'"

But, Reader, you may have learned thus to see Jesus long ago. If so, you feel your need to see Him MORE AND MORE, to discern His loveliness more clearly, to drink more deeply of the river of His pleasures, to have a growing sense of all your privileges, of all you have in HIM. Eternity will not suffice to read His glory. Much more do we require here below to make fresh discoveries of our glorious Friend. And thus your praises will abound, in this bereavement, that He has thought you worthy to

be chastened, worthy to receive a fresh disclosure of His beauty. The glass of faith, the telescope of heavenly perceptions, becomes obscured, dimmed by the dusty influence of earthly things, the tendency of daily life to depress experience and hurt the soul. And thus you set your seal to this affliction, and thank God for His faithful hand. And if you know what objects hitherto have hid Him from your view, the more will you be grateful for the besom of His chastening, that sweeps the obstacles away. And so, with a growing sense of your necessities, and an ever-opening aspect of His loveliness, how much you have still to learn—even now will you meekly say, “THAT WHICH I SEE NOT, TEACH THOU ME.”

But, beside these main inquiries, there are other questions to be raised, fresh objects to be discerned, ever recurring need of chastening, new occasions to exclaim, “THAT WHICH I SEE NOT, TEACH THOU ME.”

How many lessons have we STILL to learn, even those among us the most advanced in light and knowledge! Were our days on earth ten thousand, or twice ten thousand years, still LEARNERS should we be, still requiring to sit at the feet of Jesus to learn fresh lessons day by day. How imperfect, at the best, our knowledge of the truth! What a slight perception of our duties! What a shallow view of our shortcomings! The right estimate of our own character how dim! How many corners of our hearts unventilated! How many hiding places of infirmity left undisturbed! How many spots of darkness! Our "WHOLE BODY" how far from being "FULL OF LIGHT!" (Luke xi. 36).

And thus, what a scope is opened for inquiry, what a field for close investigation, when we are chastened of the Lord! For whenever we say, "That which I see not, teach Thou me," we must take heed

that earnest SEARCH attend the prayer. "Who can understand his errors?" the Psalmist says; and he adds the prayer, "Cleanse Thou me from secret" (that is, unconscious) "faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me" (Ps. xix. 12, 13). If we make this our prayer, herein we do well. But what saith the Lord to such as utter it? "TAKE us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes" (Cant. ii. 15). Thus every one is set to watch his portion of the vineyard for the Lord—WITH HIS OWN HAND to catch the foxes, and destroy the vermin that infest it—in other words, to keep his heart (Prov. iv. 23), investigate its secret places, read his own character, discern his faults, discover his shortcomings, and spare them not. Grace was never meant to render men automata, to paralyse exertion, and, because

strength proceeds from God, that we should do nought ourselves. Quite the reverse. He that does most himself through faith and grace shall receive the most of God (Phil. ii. 12, 13); and he that sifts his motives most inquiringly shall receive the plainest revelation of what requires to be corrected and overcome.

Sleep not with sorrow, then, my mourning friend. I know it disinclines you to make an effort. You fain would slumber on in visions of the past, and dreaming aspects of your present pain. Awake, I pray you, to your duty, to your interest with God, and leave it not uncertain what lesson He would have you learn. Survey your conduct in the family, whether you are there "as the light of the morning when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds" (2 Sam. xxiii. 4). Examine well your principles, how you conduct the affairs of life—remembering the Eye that is upon

you—the Ear that heareth all you say. Look and see—have you kept your heart with diligence—have you brought into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ? Have you confessed the Lord in word and deed, as not ashamed to own His name? Have you been diligent in study of the Word, and prayer, according to your opportunities? In how many things may you require to say, “THAT WHICH I SEE NOT, TEACH THOU ME”! How solemn, then, the visitation that suggests the word! What deep responsibility BEREAVEMENT brings with it! What business to be transacted between us and ourselves—between us and the Lord!

Mourner, I will not trouble you with further arguments or multiplied appeals. I leave you to the Lord. I pray you, receive my words with due allowance for infirmity, and counsel imperfectly conveyed. With all my heart I wish you well. In

your BEREAVEMENT may you be sanctified, strengthened, and consoled! If I should never see you in the flesh, God grant that we may meet in heaven! May you and I have reason to be thankful for our troubles, even for sore Bereavement, and for every visitation that makes us say, "THAT WHICH I SEE NOT, TEACH THOU ME"!

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